

## ABSTRACT

### **Church Engagement in Neighborhood Revitalization: Mobilizing and Sustaining Disciples in Ministry to Marginalized Neighbors**

by

Austin Maxheimer

The purpose of this project was to discover what motivates and sustains church engagement in neighborhood revitalization. A growing awareness in popular church literature demonstrates that outreach ministries practiced by local churches have not only been ineffective in bringing about wholistic restoration of marginalized neighbors but have contributed to cycles of dependency leading to generational poverty. While engaging in neighborhoods through an assets-based approach to community development has begun to gain traction by a sub-set of thought leaders as a corrective response for churches, research which explores what moves disciples of Jesus and churches into neighborhood work is largely missing from the field of study.

The research was completed in the applied ministry context of the Evansville, IN. Fifteen disciples of Jesus active in neighborhood revitalization efforts were interviewed to discover what motivates and sustains their engagement. Eight pastors who are currently not engaging in neighborhoods participated in a focus group. Finally, four congregations with a total of 160 congregants participated in a survey aimed at discovering correlations and interrelatedness of the respondents' stated beliefs, view of the role of the church, and frequency of various expressions of faith in action. The neighborhood revitalization practitioners and church pastors also completed the survey to create comparative samples.

It was the intent of the research to discover Biblical understandings/themes and real-life experiences that can help mobilize local churches into wholistic ministry to marginalized neighbors in under-resourced neighborhoods and identify potential barriers that keep churches and disciples from engaging. Collectively, these findings can help inform the practice of ministry through creating experiential learning opportunities among marginalized neighbors, leveraging the local church for transformative missional impact, and helping local congregations rediscover the calling of the church to restore the least of these living in urban centers. Neighborhood revitalization is not merely a vehicle for missional engagement but a participatory ministry of Jesus that can help shape disciples into the likeness of Christ.

**Church Engagement in Neighborhood Revitalization:  
Mobilizing and Sustaining Disciples in Ministry to Marginalized Neighbors**

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Doctor of Ministry

by

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Overview of the Chapter**

Chapter one provides an introduction to neighborhood revitalization as a vehicle for the people of God to engage in Kingdom work in urban center neighborhoods. Assets-Based Community Development (ABCD) is the approach to neighborhood revitalization assumed throughout this dissertation, and the two terms will be used interchangeably. The researcher provides a rationale for the project evolving from personal experience and supported by research. Research questions will be presented that get to the heart of bridging the gap between the church and the marginalized of society in urban centers. Research questions will also show limitations and methodology that stem from the ministry problem. The desired outcome is to see the people of God activated in the Mission of God uniquely in ministry to marginalized populations within a community through neighborhood revitalization.

### **Personal Introduction**

In the fall of 2013, we led our small groups at One Life Church through “The Shift Exercise.” This exercise was designed with the intent of shifting the primary focus of our decentralized Christian communities toward a missional mindset. I came on staff as the Groups Director for One Life Network twenty months prior and had largely operated within the existing groups model that was in place. That first season was one of rapid numerical growth both in our church and in our groups. During that stretch we doubled the size of our congregation, moving from 1,000 attendees on a typical Sunday, to 2,000. We soon more than quadrupled our number of small groups, with the count

going from seventeen to seventy-two. It was an exciting time full of momentum and movement as God was surely doing a work among His people in our region.

Coinciding with this season of rapid growth was a discontent manifesting within my own leadership. I observed that our groups were not aligned with the mission of the church which was helping people far from God experience Jesus. Our church culture was such that we were mission-driven and one of our core values was missional thinking. What I saw, though, was that this mission-centric approach influenced our Sunday services and how we tried to lead our people in their everyday lives but was completely absent from the praxis of our groups ministry. The small groups functioned more as social gatherings for Christians, insular Bible study groups, or dysfunctional holding tanks of coerced connection. Undoubtedly there was some discipleship happening in the groups, but it was by default, not through intentional focus. There was no vehicle for mission whatsoever.

Running parallel to these developments was an emergence of our ‘Engage’ philosophy for local missions. Engage is simplified shorthand for a process of engagement—Listen, Align, Act, Repeat—in neighborhoods for asset based community development; the desired long-term outcome of seeing quality-of-life rise for neighbors living in under-resourced neighborhoods. As an organizational leadership team, we had been heavily influenced by the book *Toxic Charity*, and the idea of a Gospel City Movement. The original vision of our church had now grown to include not only the vision of building a great church but to help build a great city. We wanted to join with what God was doing in our region and to be about the wholistic healing of individuals through neighborhood revitalization. We wanted to move beyond simply working toward

personal betterment. From the beginning of the church plant we poured significant time, energy, and resources into designated neighborhoods within our communities. God was showing incredible favor in these endeavors as community leaders, non-profit organizations, neighbors, and private investments from marketplace leaders were aligning to create impact in the East End in Henderson, KY and Jacobsville in Evansville, IN.

The task before us seemed clear: Mobilize the People of Mission (One Life Church) into the Arena of Mission (Jacobsville & East End) to join with the God of Mission to see restoration in the neighborhoods. In this way we would see the fulfillment of the vision to help build a great City and catalyze a Gospel Movement in our region, bringing us back full circle to fall of 2013 and the Shift Exercise. The exercise was an eight-week process that explored the Biblical foundations of God's call for His people to serve the marginalized, an inventory of the small group's gifting, and then a process for aligning the gifting/passions of the group with the purposes of God. I wrote the small groups curriculum, and we spent the summer leading and creating unity among both lay and staff leadership. We also aligned our Sunday morning message series to this mission. Our hope was to lead our whole church through the shift in mindset but especially to mobilize our groups and teams into the Kingdom work of restoring marginalized populations. One thing that needs to be reiterated is that this was not unknown to our congregation. Missional thinking had been a core value since the inception and launch. The Shift was not an attempt to get the value out to the edges of our church family but to gain ownership of the mission by our decentralized Christian communities.

At the close of the Shift, every group had gone through a six-week exercise that produced a mission statement: "Our Group helps people far from God experience Jesus

by \_\_\_\_\_.” The process helped them fill in the blank and give focused attention to their unique expression of mission. We did not require the groups to focus on neighborhood revitalization through Engage and Assets Based Community Development (ABCD). The rationale was that through the gentle guiding of the Shift Exercise which focuses on the organizational momentum in the neighborhoods and the general desire for the Church to help those experiencing poverty in our communities, the majority of the groups would land in some way engaged with the neighborhood initiatives.

The church came out of the Shift with great momentum. Only two groups failed to turn in a mission statement. To close out the series, we had our first “missional connection event,” where unconnected people could connect to the unique expressions of the mission of the church through what are now referred to as ‘Mission Teams’ instead of affinity or stage of life or random choice. The response was remarkable. Over 220 people signed up to join various teams. Our previous high had been eighty-four sign-ups at a “Cupcake Connection Event” during which all of the groups made cupcakes to share at their table. This was affirmation that people wanted deeper purpose and meaning to their gatherings of Christian community. They desired to be on mission with God. In addition, we saw several individuals step forward and launch new Mission Teams that looked nothing like traditional small groups. One example was a musician who started a new Mission Team with the mission statement of “helping people far from God experience Jesus by writing and performing Christ-inspired secular music.” This initiative was precisely the innovation in Christian community we were hoping to see in order to take the good news of Jesus Christ where people are.



Over the next nine months three observations were made:

- (1) Very few (about 5 percent) of the mission statements reflected a commitment to engagement in our Engage neighborhoods to help fuel neighborhood revitalization.
- (2) Once the organizational momentum moved on and the attention was off the Shift, the excitement and sustaining action behind the unique expressions of mission waned, dissipated, and then disappeared nearly altogether.
- (3) The Shift functionally killed our groups culture. The overall number of groups dropped from seventy-two to thirty-eight in an eighteen-month span. More concerning was the fact that living in Christian community no longer was the conversation among our church. Group life was no longer the unstated expectation.

By the fall of 2015, the Shift was dead in the water. I became a disenchanted leader, our remaining groups were on life support or operating outside the system, and our community—particularly under resourced neighborhoods—was not experiencing the Body of Christ living and active in the world through our groups and teams. It was safe to say the grand experiment had failed. After shifting roles within the church for a season, in October of 2017, I left the staff of the church to join Community One as the Neighborhood Revitalization Director to oversee and lead an Assets-Based Community Development initiative in the Tepe Park neighborhood in Evansville, IN. Community One is a non-profit Christian community development organization. While we operate the program of neighborhood revitalization, the underlying and ultimate motive of our work

is the same as the failed hope of the small group ministry at One Life Church—to mobilize the People of God into the Mission of God with special attention given to the missional expression of ministry to marginalized populations in our community through the vehicle of Assets-Based Community Development. We want to see churches in our city love their neighbors through neighborhood revitalization.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Every City has one or more under-resourced neighborhoods and Evansville is no exception. The Promise Zone federal designation aims to revitalize high-poverty communities. Evansville received the Promise Zone designation, encompassing the twelve neighborhoods facing the highest poverty rate in the city. Living in these geographically bounded neighborhoods are high volumes of the marginalized of our society—elderly, single mothers, addicts, uneducated, low-income, ethnic and racial minorities, etc. Coexisting alongside these neighbors are the People of God who are called to bring wholistic healing to neighbors through restoration and inclusivity in the Family of God. The reality is that very few Church attendees are aware of their under-resourced neighbors. Very few attendees mobilize to be the body of Christ in Promise Zone neighborhoods, and, if they do, the outreach usually manifests itself in the form of toxic charity which contributes to the cycle of systemic poverty.

The mobilization of the Church into disinvested neighborhoods through ABCD would bridge this double gap, allowing followers of Jesus to step into the identity to which they have been called and to help marginalized neighbors living within these geographically bounded neighborhoods step into the inheritance that God has provided for them. The outcome of this engagement would be for the Church to integrate itself into

the revitalization efforts of the center city where it needs to stand as a crucial witness in light of the ongoing and ever-increasing urbanization of the world. Every local church and neighborhood have its unique context. However, laying a foundation of knowing the God who cares for the orphans, widows, and sojourners in the Biblical witness as well as learning from pioneers, such as John Perkins and Robert Lupton who connected the church to ABCD work, will make it possible to release ministers of reconciliation into the Jacobsville neighborhood.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this study is to discover motivating factors that will lead to sustainable engagement by the people of God in ministering to marginalized neighbors within the under-resourced neighborhoods in the metropolitan region of Evansville, IN.

### **Research Questions**

The study required discovering what motivates and sustains engagement in neighborhood revitalization by disciples of Jesus including uncovering Biblical themes and understandings that serve as a faith foundation for mobilization. The study also included finding out what experiences moved participants into neighborhood work and what keeps them engaged. Finally, as the goal is to provide a discipleship pathway to engagement in ministry to marginalized neighbors living in disinvested areas of a community, potential gaps or reasons for non-engagement needed to be identified. The following research questions were designed for this purpose and answered in this study.

#### **Research Question #1**

What Biblical themes and understandings move the people of God into sustained ministry to the marginalized?

## **Research Question #2**

Where do people engage and sustain their neighborhood engagement among the marginalized of a community in their discipleship process?

## **Research Question #3**

What are potential gaps or reasons for non-engagement for church engagement in neighborhood revitalization?

## **Rationale for the Project**

First and foremost, this project matters because God shows special concern for the marginalized and consistently calls His people to take care of the marginalized within a community. The Biblical witness spanning from the Law to the Prophets and on through the Gospels and Epistles offers one unified testimony of God's heart for those that are estranged from a relationship with Him, especially those who are doubly distant due to cultural barriers. Orphans, widows, and sojourners (OWS) are shorthand in the Old Testament, representing this demographic among the Israelite nation. The Church of today has not done the appropriate contextualization of asking who the OWS's are in the cities, communities, and neighborhoods they find themselves a part of. As a result, the Church is not aligned with the center of who God calls His people to be and is missing a piece of the Lord's Prayer—that His will be done—and is, therefore, offering an incomplete witness in urban centers all across America. From a purely emotional perspective, followers of Jesus should never apathetically drive around, past, or through areas of their city where people of inherent worth and infinite worth reside who are not enjoying the fullness of life made available to them by the Savior of the World, Jesus

Christ. As the body of Christ, the Church should offer itself as a living sacrifice to restore those doubly (personal sin and societal barriers) estranged from God.

The second rationale for the project lies in the growing urbanization of the world and the subsequent increase in under-resourced neighborhoods. In 2010, the world population officially shifted from rural to urban. The precise moment is impossible to track but may be analogously represented by the following scenario: A resident of China is riding a train from their ancestral home into the heart of a city. Upon arrival they step off the platform into a new world—one disconnected from their family, social dynamics, spiritual heritage, economic functions, and most other facets of their normal life. They have truly entered into a new reality. As they integrate into the new system, they syncretize their old way of life with the new, knowing their children will have no meaningful connection with the old way of life. Within one generation, the stabilizing life of the rural setting that was present for hundreds, even thousands, of years has completely evaporated and become a story of the parents. A story disconnected from current experience.

That is the story of migrants to urban centers, but a parallel is found in the rapid urbanization of the world, and that is the issue of cyclical poverty already present in under-resourced neighborhoods. Anecdotally, everyone knows “that neighborhood” in a City or side of town. These areas are characterized by low-income, high crime, transiency, dilapidated infrastructure, under-performing educational institutions, etc. For people of privilege, there is an invisible barrier around these areas of the City that creates a physical division. Ignoring the problem will not fix it. In fact, with the growing urbanization of the world, the number of under-resourced neighborhoods will only

increase. Urbanization is hardly a new development in the United States. America crossed the 50 percent threshold in 1920. In the 2010 census, the percentage of urban dwellers was a full 80 percent and estimates have the number rising to 90 percent by 2050. These realities offer an enormous opportunity for the Church and for Christians to be present precisely where they are needed most and the Christian presence can be available on the front end of this population shift.

Finally, the researcher believes that the mobilization of the People of God into neighborhood revitalization—which argued above touches the missional heart of God for the marginalized—will engage or reengage followers of Jesus into a fuller understanding of discipleship and ecclesiology. The disengagement from church by Americans in general, the emerging generations specifically, is well documented. While 73 percent of Americans still claim to be Christians only about 34 percent report church attendance while other research finds the number of practicing Christians to realistically be closer to 20 percent. LifeWay Christian Resources estimates that 8,000 to 10,000 churches close annually. The rise of “nones” (those with no religious affiliation) is up to 33 percent and climbing. These indicators are only magnified when Millennials are pulled out and observed as a subset. Much more could be offered in support of the discontent and subsequent disengagement with church. Far from being a doomsday cry, this information affords an opportunity for the Church to reform, restructure, and align with the mission of God. Instead of asking, “How do we build a better church that people want to attend,” the missiologist asks, “What is God up to and how do we align our church activity to be partners of reconciliation?” The argument of this dissertation is that based on the Biblical witness, the answer to that question always includes the wholistic restoration of

marginalized neighbors living among our communities. This taps into the cause-driven, entrepreneurial spirit of the emerging generations and their awareness of societal and global problems. Most importantly it brings us near to the Kingdom of God, and there is no more attractive place.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Urbanization** is a population shift from rural to urban areas. Urbanization relates to the gradual increase of people residing in cities and the way in which societies adapt to the change.

**Neighborhood Revitalization** is an overarching term used to describe a process that engages both residents and stakeholders of a disinvested neighborhood or community to raise the overall quality of life or well-being of those living in the geographically recognized space.

**Assets-Based Community Development (ABCD)** is a methodology for the sustainable development of communities based on their strengths and potentials. ABCD is the applied method in the neighborhood revitalization process.

**Under-resourced Neighborhood** is a sub-section of a city united socially or geographically into a community of people where the overall quality of life (especially in areas of economics, employment, housing, health, and education) are below the rest of the city and has been that way for multiple generations—may also be referred to as ‘disinvested neighborhood’.

**Marginalized Neighbors** is a term used throughout the dissertation to reference any group that has been pushed to the edges of a society. They are a collective group of

individuals who have significant societal barriers to the pursuit of loving God which penetrates the whole of their being (body, mind, soul, and strength).

**Mission of God** is the redemption of God's creation through Jesus. Our participation in God's Mission is aligning our lives with the in-breaking Kingdom of God identified by where Justice, Reconciliation, Wholeness, and Beauty reign.

**Kingdom Work** is used to describe our participation in joining with the God of Mission as the People of Mission in the Arena of Mission. This is a higher-level, more encompassing term under which neighborhood revitalization and ministry to marginalized populations would fall.

**Discipleship** is simply and broadly defined here as the process of helping people trust and follow Jesus. A disciple is someone who is following Jesus, is being transformed by Jesus, and is on mission with Jesus.

### **Delimitations**

For this project, the researcher chose to work with fifteen disciples of Jesus who are active participants/practitioners in neighborhood revitalization, four local churches, and eight pastors not actively participating in neighborhood revitalization in the Evansville metropolitan region. Also included in the research are neighbors from under-resourced neighborhoods represented as practitioners and through published neighborhood survey responses. The research will not cover all of the under-resourced neighborhoods in Evansville, nor other churches in the community. These decisions were based on scope, accessibility, and ability to control test parameters for mobilization into neighborhood revitalization. A decision was made to exclude parachurch ministries



active in neighborhoods, as the researchers desired to find out how to activate local churches into Kingdom work expressly through neighborhood revitalization.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

This project consulted biblical, theological, and sociological literature to glean insight into how best to mobilize the People of God (the Church) into neighborhood revitalization. In order to establish a Biblical basis for ministering to marginalized neighbors through neighborhood revitalization, an intensive dive into Old Testament theologies and commentaries was taken following the researcher's own work on a Biblical survey of the thematic group of orphans, widows and sojourners. Due to a lack of scholarly articles addressing church engagement in assets-based community development work, many popular level books were referenced and drawn from to address the ministry problem. In addition, the researcher learned the history of and interviewed active faith-based community development organizations and leaders. Research was done on urban monastic or missional communities. Finally, interviews were conducted with local community development participants to determine what engaged and retained them in ABCD work. Localized neighborhood survey results will also be utilized to provide contextual support of research for the project.

### **Research Methodology**

This section will outline the research methodology employed to complete the purpose of the project. Clarification will be given on the type of research, participants involved, instrumentation, data collection methods, data analysis, and generalizability. The research project itself will be to determine successful methods in mobilizing the church to actively participate in ABCD work and to identify barriers and on ramps.

## **Type of Research**

The research is pre-intervention as it hopes to lay the foundation for participation in neighborhood revitalization by the people of God in a way that is reproducible for churches engaged in urban centers. Although quantitative methods were used through a congregational survey prepared by the researcher, the primary nature of this study has been qualitative in its methodology. Mixed methods were used wherever possible in order to delineate the research.

Specific qualitative data was gathered via one-on-one interviews with individuals engaged in neighborhood revitalization efforts in Evansville. The interview questions were constructed by the researcher using appreciative inquiry (Branson loc 388). The qualitative data was gathered in order to establish what the initial motivations and sustaining forces were for engagement in ministering to marginalized neighbors in under-resourced neighborhoods. Further supportive qualitative data was gathered through a focus group of pastors of churches on the Westside of Evansville where no formalized neighborhood revitalization is currently underway. The focus group questions were also prepared using appreciative inquiry principles. The data was gathered to discover potential gaps in engagement of local churches in neighborhood revitalization. Finally, the quantitative data was collected through a congregational survey conducted with four local congregations residing on the Westside of Evansville, the same side of town where the pastors in the focus group pastor churches. The survey was designed to investigate the relationship between congregants' belief statements, view of the church, and faith and action including engagement in ministry to the marginalized and presence in under-resourced neighborhoods.

## **Participants**

Participants included three different sample groups from practitioners of neighborhood revitalization, local congregations, and pastors in Evansville. The fifteen practitioners who participated in the one-on-one interviews were selected because of their active participation in neighborhood revitalization. They were able to provide crucial qualitative data from personal experience of what initially motivated them and currently sustains them in neighborhood engagement as an expression of Kingdom work. The eight pastors who were invited to participate in the Focus Group were selected because they lead congregations that are on the Westside of Evansville. The Westside has a traditionally disinvested neighborhood (Howell Park) anecdotally recognized by the larger community. All of the participating pastors lead congregations that are proximate to the neighborhood, and all of them live on the same side of the city as the Howell Park neighborhood. There is no current revitalization effort underway in Howell Park. These pastors were able to provide qualitative data as to potential gaps and reasons for non-engagement by churches and disciples of Jesus. Finally, the four congregations participating in the congregational survey also reside on the Westside of Evansville and are all proximal to the Howell Park neighborhood. Between the four congregations, 160 congregants participated in the survey. They provided insight through the quantitative results as to the connection congregants have between importance of Belief Statements of the Christian faith, their view of the church, and expressions of faith in action including ministry to marginalized populations and presence in under-resourced neighborhoods. The practitioners and pastors also participated in the congregational survey in order to provide a comparative sample of results.

## **Instrumentation**

Three researcher-designed instruments were utilized throughout this study. The first was a set of five interview questions to collect data from disciples of Jesus who are active in neighborhood revitalization efforts in Evansville. The interview questions were designed using appreciative inquiry methodology to be in-line with the approach of assets-based community development. The second tool was also a set of five appreciative inquiry questions, though directed toward a focus group of pastors overseeing leaders of local churches where no formal neighborhood revitalization initiative is currently underway. Both of these instruments were designed to collect qualitative data by drawing upon the respondent's attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences, and reactions to engagement or non-engagement in neighborhood revitalization as a church or individual disciple of Jesus. The final instrument was a congregational survey created and prepared by the researcher. The tool utilized twenty questions and a five-point Likert scale. The survey was designed to collect quantitative data around three areas of a congregant's view of the Christian faith: (1) Belief Statements, (2) View of the Church, (3) Faith in Action. The fifteen one-on-one interview participants and eight pastors who participated in the focus group also took the congregational survey to create a comparative sample. Taken all together the instruments were designed to determine what catalyzes and sustains missional engagement into under-resourced neighborhoods and helping the marginalized of a given community through neighborhood revitalization.

## **Data Collection**

The literature review and building of instrumentation was conducted in 2017-18, and then the research was conducted throughout 2019. The first research instrument was

audio recordings of the one-on-one interviews with neighborhood revitalization practitioners throughout the spring of 2019. The fifteen interviewees also completed the congregational survey after the completion of the collection of the qualitative data from the interviews. The audio recording of the focus group also took place in the spring of 2019. All eight participants completed the congregational survey after the completion of the focus group. The four congregations participating in the congregational survey completed the survey throughout the summer of 2019. The survey was sent to the congregations through Survey Monkey. The three different instruments were collected in alignment with the purpose statement and research questions aimed to discover motivating factors that will lead to sustainable engagement by the people of God in ministering to marginalized neighbors in under-resourced neighborhoods in the Evansville, IN metropolitan region.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected represents a mixed-methods approach of qualitative data through the interviews and focus group and quantitative data through the congregational survey. The analysis of the qualitative data began by developing and applying codes to the responses by the participants in the one-on-one interviews and focus group in order to identify initial motivations and sustaining factors in neighborhood revitalization engagement by churches and disciples of Jesus. Next in the analysis was the identification of themes, patterns, and relationships between the data points collected in the interviews and the focus group. This was done through discovering repetitions in words and phrases appearing throughout the qualitative data. In addition to the quantity of comments, a comparison was made for similar repetitive themes that emerged across

the data points and interview questions. Finally, a summary of the themes was presented from the data that were linked to the aim of the research in discovering what mobilizes the People of God into the Mission of God as expressed in engagement with marginalized populations in under-resourced neighborhoods.

The quantitative data collected from the congregational survey was analyzed first by applying a 1-5 scoring of the Likert scale in order to find the mean responses from the participants. This survey allowed the researcher to analyze the raw averages of the difference in responses to the congregants' importance of Belief Statements in their everyday lives, the agreement with their View of the Church, and their participation in the various Faith in Action items presented in the survey. The survey also allowed for a comparison in responses between the congregants, neighborhood revitalization practitioners, and pastors. Next was an analysis of the correlation between the responses within the survey, showing how strongly the variables are related. A conditional breakdown was also completed drawing out the respondents who indicated that they 'Often' participated in ministry to marginalized populations and engaged in under-resourced neighborhoods to discover what Belief Statements and View of the Church differentiated these participants from those who indicated 'Never' or 'Seldom'. Finally, a Factor Analysis was run to identify what structures were underlying the respondents' interrelationships between the survey questions.

### **Generalizability**

The research project is intended to address a specific ministry problem the researcher is facing in the context of engagement in ministry in and to under-resourced neighborhoods in the Evansville, IN metropolitan region. However, the project can be

generalized to any ministry facing the same problem of mobilization of churches and disciples of Jesus into neighborhood revitalization as an expression of Kingdom work. While every context—community, city, neighborhood—is unique, the trustworthiness of the research lies in the shared experience of under-resourced neighborhoods in urban centers. The transferability of the findings can be applicable wherever the people of God live in community with the marginalized of society. While there will likely be variance in replication due to leadership and resourcing, the dependability of the research will bear witness to itself as it is confirmed in other neighborhoods. The credibility of the research is checked against other community development initiatives throughout the United States. The instruments designed to conduct the research can be easily replicated in other contexts as a pre-intervention to discover motivating factors that will lead to sustainable engagement by the people of God in ministering to marginalized neighbors in under-resourced neighborhoods.

### **Project Overview**

This project outlines a pre-intervention study aimed to discover motivating factors that will lead to sustainable engagement by the people of God in ministering to marginalized neighbors in under-resourced neighborhoods. Chapter Two discusses the need for churches to engage in neighborhood revitalization by providing a Biblical foundation for the People of God to bring wholistic restoration to individuals and communities. A case is also made for the need of churches and Christians to engage in neighborhood work due to the rapid urbanization and subsequent rise in under-resourced neighborhoods and marginalized populations in urban centers. Early adopters and practitioners of mobilizing Christians and churches into neighborhoods are reviewed in

the literature. Chapter Three outlines the various ways the researcher will investigate his research by presenting the methodology and instrumentation of the research. Chapter Four presents the qualitative and quantitative data collected through the research and analyzes the data from the one-on-one interviews, focus group, and congregational survey. Chapter Five outlines the study's major findings for each discovery and presents implications for ministry.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

#### Overview of the Chapter

This chapter reviews the relevant literature around the ministry problem of church engagement in neighborhood revitalization. The first section will explore the Biblical and Theological foundations of the topic. As today's urban centers are not contextually similar to Ancient Near East cities, a correlation will be made between a recognized marginalized people group—the Orphans, Widows and Sojourners (OWS)—that dwelt within Israel among the People of God. Review of how God calls and commands his people to engage this marginalized population will serve as the bedrock of the foundation for ministry to today's marginalized neighbors represented by those experiencing situational or persistent poverty in urban centers. Then the life of Jesus through the witness of Scripture will show how Jesus fulfilled God's call and commands to wholistically restore the marginalized even as he pursued the ultimate mission of the reconciliation of all things to the Father. The church, therefore, following in the way of Jesus or the discipleship process, lives out this ministry to the marginalized among their communities as the Holy Spirit, poured into followers of Jesus, guides the church to the wholistic restoration of the marginalized.

The second section of the literature review will draw the connection between the OWS in Israel (being of the Ancient Near East cultural context they are the most at-risk) and neighbors experiencing displacement and/or poverty living in disinvested geographical areas of urban centers today. Both the global phenomenon of urban migration and the subsequent rise of marginalized populations within the metropolitan

regions are creating an expedient environment for churches to develop a wholistic approach to restoring under-resourced neighbors in order that barriers may be removed from the pursuit of loving God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength. Assets-Based Community Development (ABCD) as a wholistic approach to ministry in disinvested neighborhoods will be reviewed as a corrective to local church ministries that have focused on short-term personal betterment. ABCD provides a shift toward restoring individuals and whole communities.

The final section of the chapter inspects three pioneering churches or ministries who have adopted Assets-Based Community Development as a way to engage their neighbors in wholistic restorative ministry. The Christian Community Development Association, Focused Community Strategies, and Shepherd Community Center have leveraged ABCD as an approach for church engagement in neighborhood revitalization. These early adopters have led the way as practitioners of mobilizing and sustaining engagement in under-resourced neighborhoods. Learnings from these early efforts will inform the future of ministry in urban centers. The chapter concludes by revealing the ways in which the literature informs the research design, accompanied by a summary synthesizing the main themes, arguments, and definitions as to how and why churches engage in neighborhood revitalization.

### **Biblical and Theological Foundations**

When discussing the mobilization of the people of God into the mission of God, a direct link to tie the missional activity to God's will must be present. Missionary action must flow out of the character of God. This section will attempt to outline the Biblical and theological foundations for an ABCD approach to neighborhood revitalization as a

means of ministry to marginalized neighbors rooted in God's concern for the marginalized of society—specifically the Orphans, Widows, and Sojourners found in ancient Israel. This call for the people of God to step into ministry to marginalized neighbors is couched within the larger mission of God, the reconciliation of all things, and in seeing the Kingdom of Heaven reconciled to earth. It also aligns with the idea of a city-wide gospel movement, or shalom of the city, as a sub-category of ministry the church is to participate in in order to contribute to the overall flourishing within it (Swanson 18-21). God is a God who loves, cares for, and acts on behalf of the least among us. He calls his people to the same ministry.

### **The Greatest Way of Life: Loving God, Loving Neighbor**

When Jesus was asked which was the greatest commandment, he replied with the simple axiomatic truth: Love God, Love Neighbor. Further commentary by Jesus shows that this horizontal and vertical offering of love is to be given with all of one's soul, mind, body, and spirit. In other words, with the totality of being (Halter and Smay 111; Dawn loc 1228). The declaration of Loving God and Loving Neighbor as the greatest commandment was more than a summary statement of the Old Testament commands. In the Gospel of Matthew (22.40), Jesus states that all of the Law and Prophets—a likewise summation of the whole of God's revelation—hangs (κρεμαννυμι) on these two commands. κρεμαννυμι may best be translated as 'suspended,' meaning that all the rest of the commands are contingent on the greatest and without them the others would not be upheld (Mounce 291). In Luke's Gospel, Jesus' charge to the inquirer is concluded with this promise: "Do this and you will live" (10.28, *English Standard Version*). Loving God and loving others is the way to life. It is the fulfillment of the election of the People of

God who are to bless the nations (Newbigin, *The Open Secret* loc 1065; Wright, *The Mission of God's People* loc 1087).

The commands found in the Law and the Prophets were a horizontal and vertical gift from God designed to protect the covenant (Brueggemann loc 883). The ordering of the covenant relationship is critical in understanding God's call to care for the marginalized of society. Repeatedly throughout the Old Testament, the people of God are first to remember that they too were once slaves, sojourners, and without an inheritance; therefore, they should in turn act on behalf of the ones who are now cut off from justice (e.g. Deut. 10.18-19). These commands from God are given to protect the covenant, not to gain righteousness. To be sure, blessings and curses come as a natural extension of whether or not the commands are kept, but their inclusion as the people of God was determined prior to the living out of the terms of the commands themselves (Wright, *The Mission of God's People* loc 2215). The election as a people through Abraham, rescue from slavery in Egypt, and entry into the covenant relationship were all accomplished through no merit of the Hebrews/Israelites themselves.

As such, a picture emerged of who the people of God are called to be. Their doing was to flow out of their being. This ordering of missional activity was a precursor to the grace fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ and found in the great commandment of Loving God and Loving Neighbor. The picture for the people of God then was a three-fold witness for the nations: (1) Light to the Nations (2) Gathering of the Nations (3) Blessing to the Nations (Wright, *The Mission of God* 467).

- (1) Light to the Nations. Light in the Ancient Near East would have only come from the sun or fire, both of which signify purity, being set apart, the Holiness of the

people of God (Light 509). Their way of life was to be a beacon to the Nations of God's creation, giving witness to the life-giving reality of the commands and promises of YHWH.

- (2) Gathering of the Nations. As the light acts as a beacon, the in-gathering of the Nations is both an inevitable result and an expectation for the people of God. This gathering is first modeled by the People of God themselves through regular in-gatherings built into the calendar year and marked by Festivals (Peterson 6). After the Temple was constructed, the Temple became the centerpiece of the gathering of God's people, giving the purpose of the gatherings and arriving in the presence of God. The People of God were to serve as the vehicle through which the rest of the world would come into God's presence (Mayer 632).
- (3) Blessing of the Nations. Once the Nations were drawn by the light of God's people and then gathered into the presence of God, the promise to Abraham could be fulfilled. In the presence of God His righteousness is conferred on the Nations. The People of God have therefore become a blessing to the World (Link 210-11).

### **Orphans, Widows, and Sojourners**

An important question is raised when seeking to understand God's call to his people to care for the least among them and their role in restorative work to marginalized neighbors: Who are the Orphans, Widows, and Sojourners, and how do they fit into the people of God?

- Orphans (55-אֵלֶּיךָ): A child bereft of a father whether or not the child's mother is dead. In Israelite society, being fatherless meant vulnerability to disenfranchisement as the father was the source of provision and protection.

Orphans refers mostly to literal orphans but used as a type to depict loss, vulnerability, and social disruption (Orphan 615).

- Widows (42-אלמנות): Due to the same patriarchal societal norms, the situation of the widow closely follows that of the orphan except bereft of a husband rather than a father. The widow is an archetypal image of affliction and desolation. The Biblical narrative of the widow, however, is one of redemption and of casting off the cultural expectations of shame, disgrace, humiliation, forgottenness, and reproach because of God's repeated and consistent concern for the widow; acting on their behalf for restoration (Widow 946).
- Sojourner (92-גר): The sojourner, who is a wanderer and a visitor, has no land of their own and therefore is a Biblical image of estrangement, isolation, vulnerability, and overall lack of secure status. However, the sojourner is also depicted as a universal human condition and the People of God are consistently exhorted to remember their origins as sojourners themselves. The physical reality of the sojourner is linked to the spiritual pilgrimage and relationship with God (Foreigner 300).

Taken together, Orphans, Widows, and Sojourners become a unique subset within the Nation of Israel that represents the inclusive nature of God's heart for all people; therefore, it lays open the will of God for His people in how they are to love others. In the cultural context of the Ancient Near East, OWS would have been cut off from pursuing the greatest command of God's people set forth in Deuteronomy (Deut.6.4-9) and echoed by Jesus (Matt. 22,36-40)—to love the Lord your God with the totality of your being: heart, mind, soul, and strength. The Ancient Near East, the time and place in which the

Nation of Israel was to be a witness—light, gathering, blessing—to humanity’s relationship with God, operated under a Patriarchal-Agricultural system (Harrison 396; Gower 82). Not only would societal and governmental norms and positions have been held by men, but the actual land itself would have been passed down through the line of the husband/father. Ancient Israel was not an exception, rather it mirrored the surrounding cultures (Kaiser 75; Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation* 19). This mirroring is made clear in the book of Numbers and again in Joshua with the parceling out of the conquest of Canaan and arrival in the Promised Land.

The OWS would have had no access to the inheritance of the land through patriarchal descent and were therefore effectively cut off from resources that contributed wholistically to their well-being (Brueggemann loc 579). They were marginalized, pushed to the edges of society, at-risk in the whole of their being: body, mind, heart, and soul. Breaking down each of these categories can give understanding to the full degradation they would have experienced.

Body → This is the most practical. If a person does not have access to land, they cannot grow food or raise livestock. Proper nutrition would be a real problem. Their physical bodies become at-risk as they are never sure where the next meal would come from. What is more, if you have no land, you have no home; no place to rest your head. There would have been a constant threat of exposure to the elements and, therefore, a heightened susceptibility to sickness, disease, and natural wear on the body.

Mind → If your physical body is in a state of constant stress, your mental state is soon to follow. Never knowing where the next meal is coming from—if it will come at all—and exposure to the elements will eventually destroy your mental processes as well.

The societal structures are conveying the understanding that you do not belong. Physical marginalization leads one to the belief that they are in fact disenfranchised. Being one of the “least of these” becomes a mental state instead of a mere set of circumstances.

Heart → Once the raw physicality becomes identity, you begin to make decisions based on that identity. When you do not know where your sustenance is coming from, your decision making becomes pragmatic. Hopes and dreams for life or community take a back seat to finding a way to fill your belly again. Emotionally, you become defeated as you cannot seem to get outside of the state of always being in crisis. Your will and decision making seems no longer to be your own.

Soul → The soul was the reality of the self and the direct link to a reality beyond yourself. It was the connection to the deities or deity. In most ANE the sacrificial system seemed to be the method through which you could make yourself right before God. It was an appeasement of the god so that it might go well with your soul (Gower 289; Harrison 408). Even for Israel and YHWH worship, the sacrificial system represented communion with—or entering into the presence of—YHWH and was the grounding of your being into the source of all being (Wright, *The Mission of God* 372; Averbek 122). If you had no land, you had no produce or livestock to bring as an offering. This effectively cut you off both from both communion with God and the people of God.

The Hebrew/Israelite would have connected their being to soul (*nephesh*) and heart (*leb*) when hearing the pronouncement of the Shema. All of their might (*meod*) would have been connected to the responsive actions taken, e.g. loving their neighbor (Hall 138). The soul represented their being, their living self, who they were as a person. It was a commentary on their internal reality. The heart, on the other hand, was the



counter-side speaking to the external reality. The heart represented the will or decision making and was, therefore, concerned with the doing (Blomberg 80). The Israelite would have understood the command to love the Lord Your God and to do so with all of their being and doing with all that they are and with all of their actions. Therefore, belonging in the community of the people of God meant the giving over of the whole of yourself in communion with God, precisely what the cultural systemic structures obstructed the OWS from.

### **Wholistic Restorative Ministry of the People of God**

The question looming for the People of God was what to do with their marginalized neighbors. There were people living among them who were essentially cut off from communion with both God and the larger community due to the reality of living inside a Patriarchal-Agricultural society, not to decisions or actions of their own. In the surrounding cultures of the ANE, caring for Widows is mentioned as a virtue (Widow 947). However, there is often a difference between what is in the books of a society and how it plays out in the real life of everyday individuals. Without the protection of inherited land, OWS often found themselves among the beggars, prostitutes, indentured servants, or dead (Walton, Matthews, and Chavalas 277). This led to the formation of the Laws, calling for care of the OWS and the continuous calling of the people of God to remember their commitment by the Prophets. By taking a look at two paradigmatic passages—one from the Law and one from the Prophets—one discovers how the marginalized of the Nation of Israel were to be viewed and treated in the community of God.

Deuteronomy 10.12-22 serves as the paradigmatic passage from the Law. Within this passage, there are three basic ideas that shape the passage:

- (1) Command to obey as the people of God (v. 12-13; 16; 20)
- (2) Nature and actions of God on behalf of His people (v. 14-15; 17-18, 21-22)
- (3) Response to others by the people of God based on the nature and actions of God (v.19)

Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, *and* to keep the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, *even* you above all peoples, as *it is* this day. So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer. For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the sojourner by giving him food and clothing. So show your love for the sojourner, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name. He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons *in*

*all*, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven. (Deut. 10.12-22)

The vertical relationship with God that requires fear, love, and obedience flows from the nature of God himself who first loved the Israelites and rescued them from slavery through a show of great might. Further, verse fourteen takes the root of this relationship all the way back to Creation and the Lordship over all existence. In other words, the foundation of reality is in our relationship with God, but God's will can be seen in how he acted on behalf of the people of his creation both in the past and the present. The call to remember the past is linked to action in the present for this reason. It comes to a clear focal point in verse nineteen, the only action in this pericope that is toward another. Israel is to love the sojourner because God Himself executes justice for the OWS (v. 18). The circular logic of Jesus' Great Command is complete—loving the Lord will reveal his character and actions in his creation, giving testimony to the God who rescues those who cannot save themselves—proving his infinite love out of which the people of God now act as his emissaries to help others experience this rescue (Van Gelder and Zscheile loc 5829; Snyder and Scandrett 160). The OWS, who were effectively cut off from communion with God and others due to their cultural milieu, are the epitome of the ones who cannot save themselves and, therefore, are the explicit mission of the People of God (Foreigner 301).

Prophets served as a call for the people of God to remember and reenter the relationship (Ryken 166; VanGemenen 139). The physical exile from the Promise Land was merely an extension of the spiritual reality experienced by the people of God for violation of the covenant relationship. The Prophet's role was to then communicate

God's relational love to Israel, first restoring and later returning the Israelites to God Himself (Wright, *The Mission of God* 95). As such, Jeremiah 7.5-7 can stand as the paradigmatic passage reflecting God's heart for the marginalized of society and for the way in which a people living under His Law should act toward this people group.

For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor, *if* you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor walk after other gods to your own ruin, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. (Jer. 7.57)

The failure of Israel to act on behalf of OWS is precisely what violated the covenant relationship. This failure reflected a lack of intimacy with YHWH who cares for the marginalized and even executes justice on behalf of them in order to incorporate them into the people of God. If they do not align their actions with God's own, then they do not know him and therefore cannot be known by him (Wright, *The Mission of God* 96; Volf 601). The fact that the injunction of how to treat the OWS in this passage sits between the practice of justice in (v. 5) and remaining loyal to God (v. 6b) is no coincidence. The importance of seeing between the lines of Jesus' recitation of the greatest command for the people of God is seen here: Love God, Love Neighbor, and act on behalf of those cut off from doing so, with all of their heart, soul, mind and strength. These actions are the defining outward expressions that reflect a YHWH community (Halter and Smay 111; Scandrette loc1359).

The Exile then becomes the judgement for violating the relationship. In another passage in Jeremiah, outside of the paradigmatic pericope, Jeremiah calls the nation of

Israel a harlot for walking after other gods (Jer. 3:8). Israel has succumbed to the temptation of idolatry and, therefore, became a prostitute, giving away their intimacy to their own ruin. They are at war with one another—Israel and Judah, a divided nation—and are not acting on behalf of the OWS (Carroll 71). God brings judgment, in this case via the nation of Babylon, to bring the consequences of their separation to forcefully remind them of their heritage as sojourners and to eventually return them to their inheritance. The physical removal of the people of God from the Promised Land to Babylon was a representation of the spiritual reality that had already occurred as was evidenced in their idolatry and treatment of others (Carroll 72; King 10). As Exiles in Babylon they were once again Sojourners. They had no land to call their own. They were fatherless and landless, cut off from their inheritance, left at the margins of the Babylonian culture. They had been brought low and reminded of from where they came and what they were called to remember in the Law. In this way, God was shaping his people for when he would bring them home in order that they could become a people that would indeed act on behalf of the marginalized, and they could become an extension of his will, acting on behalf of him in his creation (Wright, *The Mission of God* 83).

The thematic flow of Judgement—Exile—Return—New Relationship is completed in Jeremiah 31 in a passage that shows the fulfillment of the Law in Deuteronomy and the exhortation of the Prophets in Jeremiah 7.5-7. God's Law would no longer exist external of the individual or community but would one day be written on their hearts—stated again here for emphasis—that the heart may best be translated as “will” to carry the full force of *leb* (Carroll 208). When God Returns his people from Exile, they will operate under a renewed relationship, one where the Spirit of God

himself is imprinted on the hearts of his People. The covenant community will act toward others in full alignment with the character and will of God which has been shown to be uniquely oriented to the marginalized of society (209).

### **Wholistic Restorative Practices for the Community of Faith**

God made clear his intentions for the OWS throughout the Laws and the Prophets, guiding Israel to incorporate practices into their community that would integrate them wholistically, with all their heart, mind, strength, and soul.

**Gleaning.** (Deut. 24.17-21): Gleaning was the practice of leaving a part of the harvest in the field for OWS to harvest themselves. In this way, they could bring in their own sustenance and have their strength restored.

**Listening.** (Exod. 22.21-24): If OWS are mistreated, they are to cry out and YHWY will hear their cry. They are to be given a voice in the community and in this way have their heart (will or decision making) restored.

**Execute Justice.** (Deut. 10.18-19; 27.19; Ps. 146.9): Biblical justice can be understood as aligning reality with the character of God. When the people of God, therefore, execute justice on behalf of the OWS, they are restoring their heart and soul.

**Incorporate into Tithe.** (Deut. 1.:29; 26.11-13): A landless, fatherless, husbandless individual would have no offering to bring to allow them entrance into the presence of and communion with God. Incorporating the OWS into the tithe of the people would ensure their soul was restored.

**Include in Celebration.** (same + Deut. 16.11-14): Incorporating the OWS into the tithe was not merely entrance into a religious ceremony. In ancient Israel, the various

offerings were also to be enjoyed through festivals. They were to feast and commune together, and, therefore, be restored in mind and strength.

**Protect.** (Deut. 24.17-21; Jer. 7.6; 22.3, Ezek. 22.7): The Law and Prophets built in protection to cover those most exposed. This included physical and economic protection. Knowing that protection is present allows for freedom in decision. Freedom to make decisions is a restoration of the heart and mind.

**Mourn With.** (Ps. 94.6): Orphans and Widows have by definition experienced loss. Similarly, Sojourners have experienced loss of family, culture, and identity. The exhortation for the People of God is to mourn with the OWS. When a community empathizes with the hurting, they are restored in their heart, soul, and mind.

**Care For.** (Zech. 7.10; Mal. 3.5): Seems the most basic, but the prophets Zechariah and Malachi lament that the people of God simply do not care for the OWS and, therefore, are not after God's own heart. Caring for others and showing the marginalized compassion restores the whole of a person.

All of these commands and exhortations create a normative behavior for the People of God toward the OWS. Taken together, for those following the way of YHWH, they produce an orientation toward the marginalized of a society: (1) Common Identification (2) Compelled by Love (3) Wholistic Restoration.

**Common Identification.** The default mode for those in positions of privilege is to view those on the margins of society as less-than. They have fewer possessions. They have less power and influence. As a collective demographic, they have less health, education, and income. Throughout human history, those in positions of power have leveraged the marginalized for personal or class benefit (Foreigner 300). Slavery and

indentured servitude have served as unrelenting witnesses to this fact right up to our modern time. Even when one's orientation toward the marginalized is to help and not to leverage, thinking of them as the 'other', the one who needs help, the one who can benefit from charity, the one who is still lesser is easy (Lupton, *Toxic Charity* 39). The exhortation for the people of God to remember that they themselves were once Sojourners in Egypt was to serve as a refrain that played in their mind as they interacted with the marginalized (Hall 202). Remembering their past rooted them in common identity. The call was not only to remember but to put this into empathetic practice as Israel was to listen and mourn with the marginalized. The inclusion in celebration was an invitation to the table. The common identification moved the OWS from "they/them" to "us/we".

**Compelled by Love.** As already established, the Law and Prophet's repeated injunction to care for the marginalized flows out of God's character and is evidenced by his will—his willingness to act on behalf of the OWS. Jesus himself sums up all the Law and Prophets with the command to love God with all that you are and to love your neighbor as yourself. The people of God are to love others because God first loved those whom he elected to live with in a covenant relationship (Wright, *Mission of God* 209; Dawn 178). Taken together, this calling presents a people compelled by love—not obligation—to act in love toward the marginalized. The definition of this love, from a Christian worldview, is one of self-giving and self-sacrifice (1 John 3:16). Christians join in the mission of God by joining Him in love for the other.

**Wholistic Restoration.** Finally, the call to care for the OWS was not one of charity but of the wholistic restoration of an individual's mind, strength, heart, and soul



as well as restoration into the community of the people of God (Wright, *The Mission of God* 289; Snyder and Scandrett 107). Whether it was by restoring their strength through allowing them food and dignity and to harvest their own food, through including them in the tithes and offerings to restore their heart and soul, or through any of the other examples listed above, the aim was not merely to minister to temporal felt needs but to restore and reflect the wholeness of who they are in the presence of God.

### **Jesus the Christ – Fulfillment of God’s Ministry to the Marginalized**

Through the repetitive nature of the commands throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, the Scripture demonstrates that God has a particular concern for the OWS. The argument here is that the reason for this concern was contextual in that among an Agricultural-Patriarchy form of society the OWS were Fatherless and Landless. This fact means they would have naturally been pushed to the edges of society, at-risk, and vulnerable which is what has been summarized as “marginalized”. In this situation, the OWS would have had natural barriers from the greatest pursuit an ancient Hebrew-Jew could have in life: loving God with all of their being—heart, mind, soul, and strength. God then gave his people a way of seeing the marginalized by connecting his nature to their plight and gave his people a set of practices aimed at restoring the whole of the OWS’ person and then integrating them back into the community of faith. If Jesus is the fulfillment of the purposes of God, this general framework will be lived out in the life of Jesus as he ushers in the kingdom of Heaven (Wright, *The Mission of God* 501; Guder, *Missional Church* loc 2745).

While the idea of fulfillment is most prominent in the Gospel of Matthew, the use of the word *plerow* to describe Jesus is also found in John, Luke-Acts, and scattered

throughout the Christological prayers/hymns in the Pauline Epistles (Schippers 741). The imagery associated with the word is that of an empty vessel being filled to overflowing (Fill-Fullness 284). The three primary uses are Jesus filling up to overflowing the Old Testament Scriptures, the Holy Spirit filling up the disciples of Jesus to overflowing, and the everyday practical sense of a cup or valley being filled (Schippers 736). Interestingly, the same imagery used for Jesus fulfilling Scripture is used for the in-filling of the Holy Spirit in believers. The key thought being communicated in both instances is the radical reorientation of the Hebrew-Israel-Jewish worldview into Jesus the Christ (Fill-Fullness 284). The Old Testament Scriptures were not merely static scrolls on a book shelf, they were the story of the people of God, the way of life, and the foundation for the way in which they viewed reality. In other words, the Scriptures informed their identity, guided their daily life, and provided meaning and purpose as a collective community (Anderson 3). The bold declaration of Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Luke 12.27) and the subsequent understanding of the New Testament authors and earliest believers is that Jesus fulfilled all of this. In him, the identity, meaning, and purpose of the people of God are fulfilled (Enns, *Apostolic Hermeneutic* 277). Jesus not only fulfilled this particular prophecy or archetype found in the Old Testament—although that surely is in the purview of the claim—but he filled up to overflowing every pen stroke, every line, every verse, even the reason as to why it was recorded and passed along in the first place. Likewise, when followers of Jesus put their faith in him and are filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit, they now carry on the same fulfillment for the people of God (Bolger 18; Seamands loc 45).

The narrative now comes to the overarching Mission of God. An argument can be made that God's ultimate purpose for humanity is for them to have life—existence, consciousness, being—and life to its fullest. God creates life in Genesis and establishes eternal life in Revelation, book-ending the Story of Scripture with pictures of flourishing life. The very name given to the Holy Spirit in Scripture is that which animates or enlivens, and that is what God sends to the Church and disciples of Jesus to fill up their being (Larkin 31). In the Gospel of John (John 10.10), Jesus came so that we might have life and have life abundantly. However, the other side of that story is that sin separates humanity from the source of life: God Himself. These two ideas—life and separation—are resolved through the reconciling work of Jesus Christ. Paul makes this explicitly clear in the second letter to the church at Corinth,

All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:18-21)

There may be no simpler presentation of what Gerhardus Vos coined the “already but not yet” work of Christ through his life, death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension as the two juxtaposed participles in this passage (Ladd 66). In verse eighteen, the reconciliation done by Christ in believers is an aorist, a completed action. In verse nineteen, the reconciliation is in the present tense denoting a current activity. This

activity sets up the pivotal turn in verse twenty where those in Christ already reconciled to God are now given the same mission as Christ, namely the ministry of reconciliation. What is being reconciled is the relationship with God, but this is done through the reconciliation of self, others, and the world (Snyder and Scandrett 146). The ministry of Christ even as he heads toward his ultimate mission should reflect this reconciling work. A ministry of reconciliation is in fact the testimony seen throughout the Gospel accounts.

The reconciliation of the Self is needed to pursue the Greatest Commandment—loving God with all that you are. The pieces of the whole—heart, mind, soul, strength or emotional, intellectual, spiritual, physical—give a picture of the various ways in which humanity can be broken and barriers can keep one from this pursuit (Seamands loc 1245; Scazzero 117). In the life of Jesus, the extension of the Greatest Commandment is lived out then turned outward to love others by the taking of his life and giving it for the reconciliation of others. Providing a brief summary of merely a few examples from Jesus' life will have to suffice.

- (1) Emotional—The heart, or emotional life, was the seat of will or desire for the Ancient Near East culture. This is seen in Jesus' closest disciples as a repurposing of their lives toward God: the fishermen become fishers of men (Matt. 4.19), the tax collector in the service of God instead of in service to Rome (Matt. 9.9), and the Zealot as a revolutionary in the Kingdom of God instead of the Kingdom of Israel (Luke 6.15; Acts 1.13). To the general masses, the sharing of the parables was a reorientation of their inner-selves to align their will to the Father's (Matt. 13.11ff). They uncovered the truths of God, not in a didactic way that informed the mind, but in a way that touched the heart and revealed the desires of the

Father, making the kingdom of Heaven more than merely instructions to obey but a reality to be desired. Finally, his nearness or proximity allowed for empathy to be experienced. Jesus was not far off but near to the broken-hearted (Matt. 5.4), he wept for his friends (John 11.35), his righteous anger was felt (Mark 11.15), and the joy of the table witnessed (Matt. 9.10; Luke 11.37).

- (2) Intellectual—Jesus clearly sought to make the mind whole as well. Known first as Rabbi, the Teacher never stopped spurring the intellect (Mark 9.5; John 1.49). It was his regular rhythm of life during his public ministry to enter into the Synagogue and teach (Luke 4.16). The most famous of his teachings, the Sermon on the Mount, endures even to this day outside the Christian faith (Matthew 5.3ff). For his closest disciples, Jesus often gave clear instructions and explained the meanings of parables, moving them from an exploratory story to a more didactic learning (Matt. 13.10). Even relationally, as when during travel the Sons of Thunder are arguing over who will be the greatest, Jesus would use these natural moments to teach, turning their minds to the Father (Matt. 20.21ff).
- (3) Spiritual—This is the reconciling work most clearly associated with Jesus today as the Enlightenment-influenced dichotomization of the soul-spirit to the religious realm has been the primary emphasis for at least the last couple hundred years (Van Gelder, *The Missional Church in Perspective* 19; Wright, *Mission of God* 44). Jesus cared deeply about the reconciliation of the soul to God. His last recorded words on the Cross were in commending his Spirit to the Father (Luke 23.46). The separating out of sin to the spiritual realm is erroneous and should instead be viewed as affecting the whole of an individual, community, and world.

However, Jesus' act of the forgiving of sins throughout his worldly ministry (Luke 7.48; Matt. 9.6; Luke 2.43) reflects most clearly with the aligning of one's spirit with the Spirit of God, being able to enter into the presence of God, and being sustained by the Spirit of life.

- (4) Physical—Clearly the healing of the physical body was a primary practice of Jesus' public ministry. They are consistent from beginning to end in the Synoptic Gospels and include the blind (Matt. 8.22), leprous (Mark 1.40), paralytic (Luke 5.17), blood diseased (Mark 5.21), dropsy (Luke 14.1), mute (Matt. 9.35), among many others. Physical healing also appears in the Gospel of John (5.1ff) and is the known factor of recognition associated with Jesus in the few supporting extra-Biblical documents (Mykytiuk). Simply stated, Jesus was known as a healer and showed a great concern for the physical body. This concern was manifest beyond healing, however, as there was also an emphasis on all physical life. The feeding of the 5,000 is famously present in all four Gospels before Calvary. Jesus is often seen feasting and reclining at the table. Two resurrection accounts emphasize Jesus' eating (Luke 24; John 20). Jesus' concern for the physical manifests in nature as in his rebuking a storm at one point and bringing peace to chaos in that narrative (Mark 4:35-41). The Gospel records bring a deep sense of physicality to their testimony that is often overlooked today.

All of these separate pieces of an individual are a part of the whole of being. The whole being is what Jesus was concerned with during his public ministry. As he went towards his ultimate mission of the reconciliation of all things to the Father, Jesus fulfills the reconciling ministry God had called his People to participate in from the beginning of

election (Newbigin, *The Open Secret* loc 430). Whether having dominion over creation, being a blessing to the nations, or serving as a covenant witness, the ministry of the people of God is to help others see, experience, and enter into wholeness in order that they can pursue loving God with all that they are (Snyder and Scandrett 167; Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks* loc 704).

There are some who are culturally more disadvantaged than others from this pursuit because of sin and its ramifications both personally and socially. In keeping with God's concern with the OWS throughout the Old Testament, Jesus lives a life concerned with the marginalized of his contextual community. The Gospels give abundant testimony of Jesus' life in relation to the marginalized. In an internally over-religious or legalistic society that is also oppressed by a ruling power from the outside, those who are religiously unclean, caught between the two factions, experiencing physical need, or in service of the outside ruling authority serve as examples of those on the edges or margins of that particular society. One could interpret Jesus' ministry as wholly to the marginalized without the benefit of the Cross and Resurrection as it saturates nearly every chapter and verse until the Triumphal Entry. The cast of characters is too long to reproduce in full here but a selection gives the overall arc—Jesus dined with tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2.15), communed with adulterers and prostitutes (Luke 7.37), healed 'outsiders' or those from other nations (Matt. 15.28), teamed up with traitors and the religiously uneducated (Mark 6.30), restored the demon-possessed (Mark 5.8), healed the afflicted (Luke 4.40), allowed women to hold important positions (Luke 8.3), and forgave the sins of the impure (Matt. 9.5). All of these in one shape or fashion were actions that restored individuals as human beings made in the image of God,

drawing out their inherent dignity and worth and integrated them back into the community of the people of God.

The vast majority of characters that Jesus ministers to are circumstantial one-time occurrences. No one gives us a glowing report of how the centurion went and converted his troops or if the adulteress woman went on to live a virtuous life. Besides the primary hermeneutic of the Gospels revealing the Messiah as opposed to being concerned with the followers of Jesus and linear historical telling (Fee and Stuart 127-30; Ryken 131-36), an important kingdom principle is communicated through Jesus' ministry—ultimately it is God and his Spirit that bring about reconciliation through Jesus. As the people of God join him in his ministry of reconciliation applied especially to the marginalized, our role is to help bring about the wholeness of others with no strings or expectations attached (Van Gelder and Zscheile loc 6561; Wright, *The Mission of God's People* loc 5069). The goal is to love our neighbors as ourselves, and God will draw them to Himself.

Jesus not only fulfilled the way of the people of God in their ministry to the marginalized and completed the reconciling work his disciples now get to join, but he now reigns over the kingdom of Heaven for eternity (Newbigin, *The Open Secret* loc 128; Wright, *Surprised by Hope* 110). The Ascension is a Christological aspect rarely considered in popular level teaching for followers of Jesus, the everyday missionaries in local churches. The reasons are manifold and include difficulty of interpretation and application as well as differing theological perspectives of eschatology. However, N.T. Wright, among others, offers that the primary reason for the lack of teaching on the Ascension is due to the dichotomization of heaven and earth and the subsequent 'pushing off' of heaven until after death (Wright, *Surprised by Hope* 44; Pearcey 103; Newbigin,



*The Open Secret* 72); the conceptualization is that salvation means going to heaven when you die. The Biblical witness speaks of a consummation of all things, a point in the chronological future where all of Creation is reconciled perfectly to God (2 Cor. 5.17; Col. 1.20; Rev. 21.5). However, the Gospel of Jesus is that this future time was fulfilled in him, and that the kingdom of heaven has drawn near (Matt. 4.17). The kingdom of heaven is something to be experienced now. What is more, Jesus reigns over this reality right now, hence the theological importance of the Ascension (Phil. 2.1ff).

### **Participation in the Reconciling Ministry of Christ to Marginalized Neighbors**

When followers of Jesus then offer obeisance to Jesus as Lord, as king of heaven, they enter into a humbled position of servanthood, relinquishing the right of a rebel to usurp the King instead living under his will (O'Brien 205). In the move of the metanarrative of Scripture which consistently turns all of humanity's stories and orderings on their head, the humbled are exalted and the servants are given the full authority of the King; their identity before the Father as co-heirs of the kingdom of heaven (Escobar loc 156). Not only is the ministry of reconciliation given, but all power and authority to implement the ministry has been granted as well (Matt. 28.18; 2 Cor. 6.7). The ramifications of such a reality are rarely discussed and even more rarely explored in application as to what has been coined kingdom work. If the people of God are going to step into the kingdom territory God has given them in their local context and join with him in his mission, this Biblical doctrine and understanding must be affirmed in order to affect transformation in our marginalized communities (Hirsch loc 1294; Bolger 18; Woodward 197). The ministry of God's people to the 'least of these' that Jesus fulfilled is not sufficient if it remains as charity or personal betterment. This ministry

must follow in the way of Jesus who seeks to reconcile and restore those pushed to the edges; thereby, the church's ministry is about a total reordering of the society in which they find themselves living (Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* loc 1477).

To the question of how to mobilize and sustain the church into neighborhood revitalization, Biblical foundations provide a summary flow as follows:

- (1) The Greatest Commandment for the people of God—introduced by the Shema and affirmed by Jesus—is to love God with the whole of your being (heart, mind, soul, strength) and then to turn and love others the same way.
- (2) God shows special concern for those culturally and systemically at risk of pursuing this path with the whole of their being. This is evidenced by the repeated and sustained call throughout the Old Testament to care for the orphans, widows, and sojourners who were fatherless and landless in an Agricultural-Patriarchal society.
- (3) Jesus perfectly fulfilled this ministry to the marginalized even as he pursued the ultimate mission of God, going well beyond meeting any one need of an individual (e.g., only physical or only spiritual), instead restoring the whole of the person and integrating or reintegrating them into the faith community.
- (4) The practices of Jesus mirrored the overarching values and practices given to the people of God for the OWS as seen in such practices as Marriage Laws, Lending Rules, Gleaning, and Festival Inclusion. These laws were designed to bring the marginalized near to God and others to identify and commune together even as the people of God gave sacrificially for them.

- (5) The Church then, in Christ, has been given the ministry of reconciliation both in ultimate purposes and immediate needs. Churches simply step into the life of Christ that brings the wholistic restoration of individuals and communities with the same power and authority of sons and daughters of our Father in heaven.

The common identification, compelled by love and wholistic restoration by Israel for the OWS as repeated throughout thousands of years in God's communication through the Law and Prophets, established a normative behavior to the marginalized for the people of God. In the Ancient Near East—a Patriarchal-Agrarian culture—the fatherless, husbandless, and foreigners found themselves with systemic barriers to loving God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength. Clear and repeated directives by God were necessary to ensure this communal group were integrated into the community of God. This was fulfilled by Jesus and continues to this day through the Church. The questions before the church today are: Who are the OWS of our culture and within our cities, communities and neighborhoods? Who is at wholistic risk due to systemic principalities and powers from loving God with all of their being? This dissertation argues that the contextualized OWS of the ANE for the American culture today are those that find themselves in under-resourced neighborhoods and are experiencing generational and/or cyclical poverty. Further, that the view of these neighbors and the wholistic restoration called for by God is best applied through the ministry of Neighborhood Revitalization utilizing an Assets-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. The research delves into how to best mobilize and sustain church engagement in neighborhood revitalization efforts as an expression of ministry to marginalized neighbors.

## **Neighborhood Revitalization as a Contextual Ministry for the Church**

### **Ever-Increasing Urbanization: Rural to Urban Migration**

Migration to cities, coupled with exponential population growth, is producing a trend of global urbanization. 180,000 people move into cities every day; 5.5 million a month, or sixty-six million a year (United Nations 12). In the next five years, more people will move into cities than the United States of America has as its entire population. The shift from rural to urban only seems to be growing. In 2011, the world officially shifted away from majority rural and estimates have the percentage of urban dwellers at 68.7 percent by 2050 (9). The urbanization of the globe, referred to as megapolis, megacity, postcolonial city, or simply the global city, is creating a new reality for billions of people across the world—the migrants, the first generation urbanites, and the city dwellers themselves are dealing with the influx of people in the place they call home (57).

In America, the population shift from rural to urban happened nearly one hundred years ago. The 1920 census was the first time the American population crossed over to above 50 percent, and the 2010 census crossed 80 percent (2010 Census). Our *World in Data* at the University of Oxford places America at 87 percent by 2050, roughly seven billion people worldwide, and that every country on the globe will be over the 50 percent urbanization threshold (Ritchie and Roser). Therefore, nearly nine out of ten people living in the United States will be living in urban centers within the lifetime of the current emerging generation. Despite the urbanization of America over one hundred years ago, this urban reality has only just begun to place itself into the ethos of America. One suggestion for the lag is that the migration from rural to urban happened too quickly for

the narrative of our country to keep pace as it will take approximately three hundred years to go from 3 percent urban to 13 percent rural (Goetz et al. 2018). Another proposal is that the foundational narrative of the United States—that any individual can come, be free, and own their own land—was so strong that displacing this “land ownership” value, is still formative today, a century after the data tells a story to the contrary (Freyfogle 280). Due to the current and projected future state of urbanization in America, churches need a proactive urban-centered ministry contextualized to the city and an understanding of how the people of God should minister to the people of the city.

The great migration from rural to urban is due in part to individuals seeking peace and prosperity. One perception is that the city acts as a shelter against the inset small view of the world in the rural social structure. In the city are like-minded people who do not place the previous generational worldview upon you (Price and Sikes; Um and Buzzard 38). Further, economic advancement seems to be either constricting or a dead end. Either enter into the same market that has sustained the local economy for generations in hopes that the local economy will continue in an uncertain future or accept an economic lid (Keller 137; Um and Buzzard 39). In the face of such choices, people are voting with their feet as mentioned above. The reality that migrants face is that they enter their new urban context as displaced people even before taking into consideration economic realities. The rural to urban migration contributes to an increase in marginalized neighbors in urban centers as the ‘modern nomads’ find themselves displaced and unknown (Holt 873). The global trend of urbanization and the profile of those migrating into City Centers looks different in America. This shift is in part due to the fact that America became an urbanized nation over one hundred years ago, so the

move into cities is not primarily the national rural poor although that population is present (Price and Sikes). An ongoing source of new city dwellers in America are immigrants who overwhelmingly prefer cities (Saunders 10; Um and Buzzard 28). Taken together, the national rural migrants and international immigrants make up a collective of urban migration that are pouring into the core of American metropolitan regions.

The desire of the Baby Boomer and Millennial generations to become city dwellers is also trending. These generations are showing mass exodus out of suburbs and back into urban centers. Until 2015, the Baby Boomer generation was the largest ever to date, and they are outliving any preceding generation (Fry). As a collective, the Baby Boomers are choosing to spend their twilight years in cities, citing affordable housing, consumer-care preferences, and proximity to health care and family as the main impetus (Speck 189). On the polar opposite end of the age spectrum, Millennials who surpassed Baby Boomers in 2015 as the largest generation in the history of humanity unequivocally want to live, work, play, and worship in the same neighborhood, necessitating walkable cities and requiring a center city location for living (17-18, 23). Pulling all these pieces together, the running list of those migrating into center city neighborhoods can be characterized by the following verbs:

- Displaced
- Foreigners
- Economically depressed
- Unestablished
- Aged-Uncared for
- Detached

A growing number of marginalized—Biblically correlating to those who experience barriers to loving God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength—are making their homes in center cities.

**Rise in Under-Resourced Neighborhoods, Disinvestment in Urban Core.**

With the increase in urbanism and continual population increase in center cities, a rise in under-resourced neighborhoods has occurred. Anecdotally, “that side of town” is a known quantity in every city. While an emerging trend in larger cities of revitalization of city core does not seem to exist thus creating affordable housing in suburbia, most cities still have urban center neighborhoods with mixed-use development, older houses, and forgettable neighborhoods as the most affordable destinations for incoming city-dwellers (O’Conner 53; Green and Hines 163-68). In addition, especially among immigrants and minorities, the urban landscape provides the safety of diversity that those populations desire. Being one *of* the many is much easier than being the one *in* the many (Um and Buzzard 41-42). While this diversity leads people to the center of the city, in reality the outcome leads to silos, or clusters, of homogenous populations as displaced peoples seek the familiarity of subcultures (Robin and Druback-Celaya 137; Goodemann 144; Reinke and Gomez 176). The existence of China Town in both New York and San Francisco is a famous example of what occurs in smaller cities across the nation. The data shows that these clusters tend to coincide with lower economic realities. From 1970-2005, poverty rates among immigrants increased while overall poverty rates decreased. The initial poverty rate for recent immigrants has also increased in recent decades (Raphael and Smolensky 27). Educational opportunities, employment potential, and lack of traditional social network relationships within the city all contribute to the socio-economic situation.

These complex and interfacing factors contribute to a rise in under-resourced neighborhoods in urban centers.

Adding to the makeup of under-resourced neighborhoods are neighbors stuck in situational or generational poverty. Not only do the rural migrants and international immigrants who make center city neighborhoods their home but the heritage of their neighbors spanned back generations. Advanced longitudinal studies like the Panel Study of Income Dynamics suggest generational poverty is becoming overwhelmingly difficult to escape. The study supports the observation that people who are born into poverty stay in poverty regardless of race, gender, or religious affiliation (McGonagle et al.). The disparity in education is increasing not decreasing. In 1970, the lowest income quartile was 16 percent as likely to earn a bachelor's degree but that statistic fell to 10 percent by 1996 (Ratcliffe 4-6). The American myth of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps and hailing the country as the land of opportunity may hold as a possibility at the individual level, but as a collective demographic data set those in poverty overwhelmingly become tied to the lifestyle (Beegle 12; Rector and Sheffield 14-16). The geographic neighborhood in which someone grows up may well show a direct correlation to poverty. A 2010 study by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development showed that appearance—or perception—of peers in a community sets expectation for jobs. What adults do vocationally directly transfers to the next generation (Education at a Glance 2010; Beegle 13; Ratcliffe 2-3). Couple the generational cycle with under-resourced areas that create inadequate housing, lack of access to food and health care, and underperforming education institutions, and it becomes a fight for survival rather than a journey of upward mobility and a high quality of life (Beegle 13; Rector and Sheffield 1-



9, 15-18; Lewis 199). These neighborhoods have higher crime, lower employment opportunities, and the same lateral networking as other areas though in case of persistent poverty is to their detriment (Holt loc 968; McKnight and Block 11-14). The result is a localized community that reproduces itself.

The collision of these three groups—rural migrants, international immigrants, and neighbors experiencing situational and persistent poverty—occur in center city areas thereby creating under-resourced neighborhoods. The population rise in urban centers is unquestioned, but how and where people are settling is not given as much attention. The clustering of these residents into defined geographical regions are what create under-resourced neighborhoods. Many possible ways exist to delineate what constitutes an under-resourced neighborhood, but for the purposes of this dissertation these ways will be limited to a combination of the following four factors: (1) A geographically defined area within an urban center that (2) has experienced prolonged periods of disinvestment to infrastructure and systems (3) where the overwhelming majority of residents are experiencing poverty and/or disenfranchisement (4) and have limited access or barriers to goods, services, and opportunities that contribute to overall quality of life.

### **Trend of Urban Revitalization—Contributing to Marginalization**

The reality of the marginalized being found in center cities is meeting up with a movement of urban revitalization. A growing trend of the emerging generation is to reengage at the localized level. The new urbanite wants to live, work, play, and worship in the same community, creating a desire for walkable cities (Speck 21, 34). This is a complete reversal of the urban sprawl ushered in by suburbia in the 1970's-1990's. This topic is a research stream unto itself and can only be mentioned as it pertains to this

paper, but it must be noted that center city neighborhoods are no longer being left to the marginalized. Due to the demand of young adults and their desire for a specific living environment, forgotten Historic neighborhoods that have suffered under a lack of municipal, private, and residential investment for multiple generations are all of a sudden receiving attention and development.

Gentrification occurs when redevelopment is brought to disinvested areas of a city and becomes negative when it begins to displace the people already living within neighborhoods experiencing renewal. Key research and findings are debated feverishly, because the fight for urban centers is a relatively new phenomenon. The early movement of urban renewal gave rise to an outcry that the poor were being systematically moved out in order to make room for the wealthy who want their space. Data seems to refute at least some of the sentiment, showing that actual displacement of residents from gentrification may be exaggerated (Freeman 2081; Vigdor 183, Newman and Owen). However, where rapid gentrification is occurring, higher displacement does appear to be present. Particularly at risk are the least advantaged and economically vulnerable (Lei et al. 27-34). A study in Philadelphia found that while residents who live in gentrifying neighborhoods are just as likely to stay or move than residents in non-gentrifying neighborhoods, the ones that do move are the most vulnerable residents (35) and are much more likely to end up in even lower-income neighborhoods with more crime and under-performing schools (36-37). Regardless of where the research falls, the threat of gentrification and the real feelings and perceptions of neighbors that they do not belong in the neighborhood as renewal occurs further marginalizes residents. While

revitalization is positive for a city as a whole, revitalization is not particularly interested in the restoration and integration of the marginalized of society.

The easiest correlation for the orphans, widows, and sojourners in the Ancient Near East in today's society are the neighbors in under-resourced neighborhoods in urban center cities. Whether from a foreign land, a shift from rural to urban, or an abutting neighborhood, they are displaced. They are not physically connected to their "father's" land. They are stuck in generational cycles with no collective understanding or perception of how to change these circumstances, or if they are aware, they feel helpless to do so. They are at-risk emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually due to such normative factors as economic poverty, high crime rates, lower educational opportunities, and lack of municipal investment in infrastructure (Beegle 12-14). All of these factors and more contribute to a lifestyle of dependence as it is the communities of at-risk populations that receive government assistance and charity from non-profits (Lupton, *Toxic Charity* 58-61). The following words—displacement, dependence, depression, despair, defeat—all lead toward one anti-Biblical sentiment placed upon the least of a community: the devaluing of individual human beings. This devaluing of the marginalized is precisely what God guarded against in His ongoing concern for the OWS in Scripture and the formation of Israel as the people of God. God called his people to the wholistic restoration and integration of the least of society into the larger community of God in a way that restored their dignity and gave them purpose in the Kingdom of God.

### **Current Response in Ministry to Marginalized Neighbors**

The question before the people of God today then is how will we respond? With an ongoing increase of urban centers leading to an increase of under-resourced neighborhoods and, within those geographical places, people being devalued as human beings, what is the church to be and do? The church needs to ask what specific measures and course of action should be taken as well as how do we shape our communities to reflect God's concern for the marginalized?

### **Toxic Charity and When Helping Hurts vs. Neighborhood Revitalization and ABCD**

The classic response has been charity. The larger Christian community has always given financially to help the least among them. The 2017 *Giving USA* report shows that Christians give nearly \$123 billion a year toward charitable efforts and organizations (2017). In addition, parachurch and non-profit ministries have exploded over the past half century. Approximately 1.5 million nonprofits exist in America with a 20 percent growth in the sector in the last ten years alone (Jones 2018). Many times, these efforts—whether financial or ministerial—are directed toward the marginalized of society. Certainly, from a Christian perspective, the people of God are trying to align with the will of God to care for those pushed to the margins of society (Lupton 31, *Charity Detox*; Corbett and Fikkert 14). However, what is often missing from the equation is the wholistic restoration of the marginalized and the integration of those neighbors into the community of the people of God (Lupton, *Toxic Charity* 4-5; Corbett and Fikkert 52-55). The inability to contextualize and adopt the Biblical mandates of Scripture as clearly seen through God's relationship with the OWS as an archetype has hindered true transformation and

ultimately wasted the resources of the Church (5, 31-35; 38-39). Whom the Church is to be for the least of society will be discussed further below. First, Asset Based Community Development will be examined and proposed as a potential solution to help mobilize churches into the wholistic restoration of marginalized neighbors living in under-resourced neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Revitalization, as an opportunity for church engagement and a ministry mobilization tool, has yet to be realized by the Western Church at large. With the rapid urbanization of the global population, the disinvestment of urban core neighborhoods, and the repopulation and/or generational residency of the marginalized within these neighborhoods, the Church needs to begin shifting away from personal betterment strategies and toward community development (Lupton, *Toxic Charity* 167). Coupled with these realities are the Biblical mandates explored earlier as the people of God are called not only to care for those most at-risk within their cultural context—OWS—but to also restore their dignity, to tap into their inherent value, and ultimately integrate them into the family of God. Finally, the command to make disciples and reproduce the life of Jesus Christ necessarily includes making people whole—heart, mind, soul, and strength. This formula allows the Church to adopt an ABCD approach that focuses on drawing out the abundant life of the focused population of marginalized in under-resourced areas. Local churches are well-positioned to help neighborhoods journey from scarcity into abundance (Brueggemann loc 477). The ABCD approach to neighborhood revitalization places emphasis on listening to those within the community itself, finding and building upon the existing assets with the community,—especially the human resources—and activating them as owners of transformational change (Kretzmann

and McKnight 13). Despite the seemingly obvious alignment, ABCD, or other approaches aiming at the whole of a person in need, tend to be on the periphery of the church outreach discussion if not all together absent.

### **Neighborhood Revitalization and ABCD as a Wholistic Solution**

Assets Based Community Development (ABCD) focuses on the collective strengths of a defined community to improve their quality of life. In a very real sense ABCD has been around since human beings clustered together in geographical locales. ABCD is simply the way in which human beings come together and create solutions to communal problems. However, the defined approach that systematizes the process, providing a framework and methodology that can be leveraged by any community anywhere, is a relatively new discipline. In 1993, John Kretzmann and John McKnight's publication became the seminal work that began the conversation. As their team visited different communities, the content for their publication emerged from a simple research question: "Can you tell us a story about a time your neighbors came together to make things better around here?" The participants—or storytellers—were encouraged to recollect any concrete experience no matter how small or inconsequential it may have appeared. Over a three-year period (1989-1992), the team visited twenty cities and three hundred neighborhoods, collecting three thousand stories (McKnight and Block 1-3).

Kretzmann and McKnight discovered through the data that the solution to a rise in quality of life in under-resourced neighborhoods was already present in the community and latent within the residents of the neighborhoods themselves. "In each of our neighborhoods reside those whose gifts and talents can produce almost all that we need to live and prosper, if they can discover, connect, and mobilize them into productive and

inclusive action” (Kretzmann and McKnight 5). Through listening, McKnight and Kretzmann discovered six recurring themes as assets in every neighborhood: (1) Skills of local residents, (2) Power of local associations, (3) Resources of private, public, and non-profit institutions, (4) Physical resources and ecology of place, (5) Economic resources of the local place, (6) Stories and heritage of the local place (5-6). Drawing out of the community these readily available resources shifts the conversation from the needs that are absent to the assets that are present. This shift represents the first break for residents stuck in generational cycles from despair to hope.

Based on the findings from the original round of neighborhood listening, McKnight and Kretzmann proposed a guided approach to neighborhood revitalization that has become Assets Based Community Development. In the simplest of terms, ABCD is an approach to community development that focuses on the assets within the community as opposed to defining a community by its needs (Kretzmann and McKnight 2-3; Green and Haines 12-13). This approach draws on the strengths and resources of a neighborhood and its residents and seeks to build on what is already present in order to enact the change the neighbors themselves desire to see. This approach is in stark contrast to the needs-based approach that is typically identified from the outside such as a government agency or non-profit organization who then comes in from the outside to bring change to the neighborhood through the programs and activities they currently run and of which they are experts (Green and Haines 26).

While an external needs-based approach may be well-intentioned, it is often unsustainable, because it is not owned by the residents themselves and, therefore, long-term investment is not present. Worse, the approach runs the risk of damaging the

residents. A quote often mentioned in responsible social change conversations that the researcher was unable to identify the source of is “When change is done to someone it is experienced as violence, when change is done by someone it is experienced as liberation (Unknown).” This idea has explanatory power as to why community development initiatives are often ignored or received by residents with apathy (Green and Haines 37-38). For an at-risk community, change brought from the outside can be interpreted as a threat imposed instead of help offered. ABCD seeks to do the opposite—to pursue a process that empowers neighbors in under-resourced neighborhoods to build their communities from the inside, and, therefore, experience the liberation of enacting the change themselves.

While each neighborhood is unique and a strict formulaic approach is cautioned against, practitioners of ABCD have outlined a general way forward that will be summarized here as listen-align-act-measure-repeat (Kretzmann and McKnight 345-53; Green and Haines 63-87):

**Listen.** Early listening is vital to the overall process. Listening places neighbors in the position of expert. They hold the knowledge and story of their community, the vision for the preferred future, and the solutions for change. Listening can and should be done in multiple ways. Canvassing the neighborhood to do a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis brings the opportunity for neighbors to give input right at their door. Survey mailers are also easy connection points. Community meetings through neighborhood associations and neighborhood call-out meetings are other vehicles for listening. Focus groups are recommended for ongoing engagement. Formal listening produces such things as Asset Maps, Vision Statements, Priority Areas,



and Goal Setting for Action. However, listening should not be isolated to a formal setting but should be a value of ABCD and something that continues in every conversation, relationship, and forum throughout the life of the initiative.

**Align.** After listening, a mechanism must be present with which to create a shared vision or common agenda, allowing for collective impact. Individuals going about doing random acts of kindness and contributing to the good of the community is not necessarily a bad thing; if those actions can be focused and directed toward the same outcomes, there is potential for transformational change. In ABCD, this is accomplished with a Quality of Life Plan. The Quality of Life Plan collects all information from the formal listening sessions into one published document that the neighbors have access to and use as a map and guardrail for all the various initiatives that begin to emerge. The Quality of Life Plan serves as a reference point that everyone can share in order to move community development forward and allows comprehensive contributions from all stakeholders while fueling the vision of the neighbors. Alignment is difficult and must be worked toward in every communication, meeting, and individual conversation.

**Act.** The next step is to put action behind the vision. Without seeing tangible movement, residents and stakeholders can become apathetic or discouraged. One exciting best practice is to post early action grants that get money in the hands of neighbors to help resource them to be the change agents in their community. Sustainability for action, however, comes from the formation of working groups around priority areas in the Quality of Life Plan developed by residents and stakeholders from the larger community. The working groups accomplish the goals that produce the outcomes for the neighborhood. The working groups need to report and track the action and accomplished

goals in order to show investment from the residents themselves. In this way they can approach stakeholders to further resource them for larger actions that help build the community from the inside out.

**Measure.** Finally, all of these actions should be measured to see if they are producing the neighbors' desired outcomes. Measurement begins with a baseline survey using tools designed specifically around the unique neighborhood's vision for change. Common baseline measurement tools include windshield surveys for housing stock, access to amenities, and Quality of Life surveys centered around health, education, and safety among others. Once the baseline survey is created, periodic assessments are done in order to see if the needle is moving in the priority areas. This evaluates whether adjustments are needed or if the work needs to stay the course. In this way, wasted action can be removed and focused action can be implemented to create better impact.

This summary is a broad summation of an involved, in-depth process. However, it is important to review the ABCD approach here to show its commitment to building communities from the inside out. This process ultimately means placing the vision, action, and assessment into the hands of neighbors and conferring value and dignity upon them.

It has been twenty-five years since McKnight and Kretzmann's publication, yet wide-scale adoption of the ABCD approach in community development has not occurred. While the principles resonate ideologically, the practice of those principles often produces fierce challenges. The biggest barrier may be in genuine resident engagement. Public participation is a recurring issue in neighborhood revitalization efforts due mainly to the opportunity for residents to participate without any real power to make decisions

(Green and Haines 37-38; Pateman 1970). Building a community from the inside out requires ownership of the human resources of the neighborhood without which the initiative is unsustainable and does not place dignity and value on the marginalized neighbors. Without participation and ownership by marginalized neighbors in the process of change, the results take on one of two generalized forms:

- (1) The movement for revitalization is stalled, rejected, or never gains traction in the first place. This dilemma often has a damaging effect on the residents because the situation is another instance where they have been promised change and have once again abandoned or felt lied to (Corbett and Fikkert 103-105). This is the way through which apathy, skepticism, and ongoing needs among residents become further barriers to systemic change. Alongside this reality is the reality that non-profit and government assistance meant to help now perpetuate the problem. As the programs offered by these organizations and institutions are not wrapped around the neighbors out of a relationship of trust but are instead placed upon them from the outside, the programs are once again rejected. Furthermore, these programs contribute to the cycle of need dependency they are supposed to be relieving (101-13). In this way, the non-profits and government agencies are perfectly positioned to continue to exist without making any real systemic change to wholistically restore neighbors on a wide scale.
- (2) The second potential outcome is that many of the problems of the neighborhood—e.g. crime, education, economic development—are solved but not by the neighbors or for the neighborhood, and so the community is built up for people outside the community (McKnight and Block 36-40). This process is often

referred to as gentrification and is the bogeyman of community development. Gentrification occurs when the residents of the neighborhood are not valued as assets or empowered to create their preferred future—discussed more fully above (pp. 63-65). Stakeholders and/or outside investors get caught up in the vision for the neighborhood—whether that be out of altruism, economic gain, political favor, or some other factor—and the physical environment, especially in the areas of economic and housing development, moves ahead of the restoration of people in the neighborhood (Green and Haines 314). The investment from outside is presented for the investors and consumers rather than for neighbors in the neighborhood. Therefore, the act is received as an act of violence and, as a result, devalues neighbors (McKnight and Block 54-61). The residents then feel displaced even if they are not physically displaced, thus creating further isolation and marginalization.

These two outcomes are disparaging in ABCD because these outcomes are precisely what the approach is designed to guard against. Resident engagement remains the biggest barrier to seeing ABCD move neighborhoods forward, because all other problems stem from this one failure.

Over the past twenty-five years there have been successes and learnings from engaging in ABCD. One is the thematic emergence of the priority areas through listening to thousands of stories and learning what a high quality of life looks like for real neighbors living in under-resourced neighborhoods. While the actual wording may vary, there are basic elements of life the vast majority of people desire whether marginalized

neighbors or not (McKnight and Block 63-64; Kretzmann and McKnight 7; Seligman 96-97):

- Safety
- Purpose (e.g. job achievement)
- Adequate Housing
- Opportunities for Learning
- Arts & Entertainment
- Healthy Living & Green Spaces

This distillation of what it takes to provide contributions to quality of life for neighbors living in under-resourced neighborhoods affords an opportunity for churches to enter into neighborhoods, engage in practices that aim towards the wholistic restoration of the marginalized, and empower residents to be the change they desire to see for their communities.

All of the pieces for church engagement in an Assets-Based approach to neighborhood revitalization seem to be in place. The contextual need is clear. With urbanization trending worldwide, bringing high volumes of displaced people into disinvested urban centers and joining residents already stuck in generational poverty, the need for a wholistic approach for restoration leans toward ABCD (Snyder and Scandrett 180). The Biblical foundations have also been made clear, and ministry to the marginalized is not an option for the people of God, rather this ministry is their very identity and mandate from God. Finally, the ABCD approach brings dignity and value to the greatest resource in disinvested areas, the residents themselves, giving them a voice and empowering them to be the change instead of change being done to them or falling

outside of their desires (Van Gelder and Zscheile loc 5990). The work of ABCD then brings life-on-life opportunities for disciples of Jesus in evangelism and discipleship.

### **The Church and Neighborhood Engagement**

Sider, Olson, and Unruh state that in our contextual moment, churches that focus on community development to express God's love for whole persons and communities will serve as the most effective witness and create kingdom impact (loc 668). Despite this seemingly perfect fit and present need for local churches to engage their marginalized neighbors and neighborhoods, no overwhelming flood of churches is engaging in neighborhood revitalization efforts. Before concluding the literature review with some pioneering examples of Christians doing work, below are a few of the primary barriers that have been identified. These barriers all inform and influence each other as well as point to auxiliary issues. While the reasons for non-engagement or disengagement in community development by the Church in under-resourced neighborhoods in order to bring about the wholistic restoration of the marginalized are manifold, three main contributing factors will be briefly discussed here: (1) Poor Missiology - Loss of Corporate Identity among Disciples, (2) Ease of Participation in Toxic Charity, (3) Divorce of Heaven from Kingdom.

**Poor Missiology.** Probably the biggest barriers are simply a lack of understanding or knowledge of the mission of God, how it is expressed through the marginalized of a community or society, and how the people of God are to join him in his mission (Walls loc 803). Urbanization, disinvested urban centers due to suburbanization, realities of generational poverty, etc. are not in the normal Sunday sermon fodder nor are they pressing concerns of churches from a missional education standpoint if on their radar at

all (Holt loc 2213; Greear 38). Missiology is the intersection of Theology, Ecclesiology, and Anthropology—or God, Church, and Culture. In Christopher Wright’s Venn Diagram, the kingdom of heaven is where a God of mission meets a people of mission in the arena of mission (Wright, *Mission of God* 61-66). If a missional hermeneutic is lacking, then the identity of Christians will not be that of a sent people even in the most general sense. What has instead shaped ecclesiology over the past sixty years or so is what has come to be known as the Church Growth model, with a stronger focus on gathering than on sending (Rah 93; Greear 29). The result has been generations of disciples of Jesus who believe their role in kingdom work is to be inviters of neighbors to a Sunday service and servants within the model and programming of their local church. Missing is the mindset of a missionary whose primary identity is being a witness of Jesus Christ being the incarnated presence of the Spirit of God who fills those in the faith community and proclaims the Gospel into their spheres of influence into which they are uniquely sent (Moynagh loc 7352).

**Ease of Toxic Charity.** Dr. Robert Lupton is one of the pioneering Christian leaders calling Christians to mobilize into neighborhood revitalization work. His methods will be reviewed in the case study of early pioneers mobilizing churches into neighborhood revitalization; he identified a widespread and pervasive barrier for local churches. That barrier is the practice of personal betterment in accordance to outreach or compassion ministries as opposed to a community development focus. Lupton identifies four quadrants to describe the general approaches for churches engaging in outreach ministries: (1) Personal Betterment, (2) Personal Development, (3) Community Betterment, (4) Community Development (Lupton, *Toxic Charity* 167).

Using the famous axiom, “Give a man a fish, feed him for a day; teach a man to fish, feed him for life,” he illustrates the difference between betterment and development. This axiom only serves as an illustration on a personal level and does not work for an entire community or neighborhood. Keeping with the fish axiom: If you were to stock a pond with fish, you could meet the immediate need and feed the community, but the pond would eventually run out and need restocked. Community development would look like developing sustainable fishing, learning to sell fish at the market, reinvesting profit into farmland to add diversity, etc. (Lupton, *Toxic Charity* 168-70). The problem with development, whether personal or community-oriented, is the ease of just giving a man a fish or dump a bunch of fish into a pond and going about your regular life activities. Development takes time and long-term investment. What is more, there is no guarantee it will succeed. Corbett and Fikkert identify paternalism as one of the main reasons that churches and Christians tend to stick with personal betterment instead of moving toward community development. The ways in which we contribute to cycles of dependency through our paternalistic outreach include resources, spiritual, knowledge, labor, and paternalism (Corbett and Fikkert 115-19). When service providers control these areas, they keep marginalized neighbors in personal betterment whereas releasing them to those same neighbors would help them move toward community development.

These factors are compounded by the previous point made concerning poor ecclesiology or missiology present in churches. If the goal of the church is to grow in numbers of Sunday attendance, then what you call people to will be to serve within programs designed to bring people into church services and to invite others to participate in these services (Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church* 72). This leaves



little margin for people to invest large amounts of time and resources into the development of other people in their community (Grear 27-28). This focus also happens to be a barrier contributing to the discipleship deficit many churches experience—the goal is to develop disciples of Jesus, not a product to consume for temporary betterment (Bolger 260). The situation grows even more complex as most of the outwardly focused followers of Jesus end up starting ministries outside of the local church because of the lack of bandwidth inside the congregation leading to a proliferation of non-profits and parachurch ministries which take on these areas of need, which then lessens the impact of the local church but creates dependency on these services as church leaders see them as their responsibility (Breen 128; Hirsch 185). Indeed, many church leaders possibly even view these ministries with pride as their congregants are the ones leading them all the while local churches have vacated the responsibility of bringing wholistic restoration and reconciliation to the communities in which they belong.

**Poor Eschatology.** Precise dating is difficult as the phenomenon was a slow shift, but certainly since the Enlightenment and infusion of Cartesian cosmology, the popular narrative of the Gospel was eventually reduced to, “You are going to hell if you do not put your faith in Jesus. But if you do believe in him then your soul will go to heaven when you die” and then designated church attendance as the fruit of achieved salvation (Guder loc 326). The danger of this narrative lies in its approximation to the truth. Partial truths, echoes of a Biblical worldview, and some handy proof-texts of Scripture would seem to support this eschatology. Unfortunately, this understanding of the Gospel, aside from serving as an extremely poor witness to the full redemptive acts of Jesus Christ, has severely damaged our engagement in wholistic restorative ministries. N.T. Wright makes

the argument that heaven is not a future destiny, but the other hidden dimension of ordinary life, i.e. God's dimension (18-19). Therefore, heaven is more appropriately understood as breaking through the now into this present reality. The mission of God is to set the whole world right. The mission was gloriously fulfilled in Jesus Christ in his resurrection and is now implemented in the world (212). The Ascension then, as discussed above, shows Jesus gone ahead into God's space, the new creation, and is both already ruling the rebellious world as its rightful Lord and interceding for humanity at the Father's right hand (113). In other words, Jesus' worldly or human ministry is not ended but continues on until the consummation. Under this eschatology, the ramifications for disciples of Jesus are profound. Eternity then is not some point in the future, but the relationship with God through Jesus that Christians enjoy now (Wright, *Surprised by Hope* 191-192; Bosch 504-10). Indeed, this relationship is clearly articulated by Jesus himself as recorded in the Gospel of John when he states, "This is eternal life: that you will know me, and the Father who sent me" (John 17.3). In this context, the idea of knowing reflects deep intimacy, an intimacy consummated by the infilling of the Holy Spirit available to all through Jesus Christ (Schmitz 398-99).

The imagery of God reconciling all things to Himself, of interlocking heaven and earth, should completely reorient the very cosmology of those in Christ (Snyder and Scandrett 100). N. T. Wright calls this the basis for all Christian mission—the future hope in Jesus, displayed in the Resurrection, leads to a vision of present hope (191). What one is doing in the present, e.g. painting, plumbing or preaching, will last into the future of God's time. "We are saved to mission. Been saved, being saved, will be fully saved. Are not saved souls but wholes, not for themselves alone, but for what God now longs to

do through them” (200). The reorientation of and influence on our cosmology and understanding of kingdom work cannot be overstated. It transforms moral checklists, serving into an identity of bearers and builders of heaven. The early Christians (CE 50-325) gave testimony to this work of God and their role in it. They considered ultimate salvation to be about God’s new world, and, while anticipating the healing of space, time, and matter, also understood that they were called to be ministers of reconciliation; active participants in the Mission of God (Hirsch and Frost loc 258; Walls loc 803). Once this view is lost, there is a real barrier to the sacrificial, self-giving, type of love that both mobilizes and sustains Kingdom work that ministers to the marginalized of society, like neighborhood revitalization (Seamands loc 763).

### **Pioneers in Mobilizing Churches into Neighborhood Revitalization**

The variables for church engagement in neighborhood revitalization all seem to be in place for the mobilization of local congregations. The global trend of urbanization and subsequent rise in under-resourced neighborhoods where displaced people are joining neighbors already experiencing generational poverty has led local churches to an opportunity for wholistic ministry. Assets-Based Community Development has emerged as an innovative approach to build communities from the inside out. ABCD places value on individuals within the community, drawing out their inherent dignity, and empowers under-resourced neighbors to be the change they hope to see, providing a framework for engagement aimed at improving the quality of life for all neighbors. Finally, the testimony of Scripture consistently shows God’s great concern for marginalized people groups. Beginning with the repeated commands to care for and adopt practices that bring about the wholistic restoration of the Orphans, Widows, and Sojourners living among

Israel, Jesus then fulfills the way of life for the people of God in which his disciples now live out in the world as witness to the restorative work of God.

One would expect to find the literature littered with examples of churches leading the way in neighborhood revitalization or at very least readily engaging with neighborhood initiatives already underway. Unfortunately, literature is very lacking in this subject area. The need for ABCD as an approach for churches and Christians to engage in neighborhood revitalization has begun to be identified, but research on the actual mobilization is missing (Groningen 40; Tatlock 287). The few scholarly articles written on church engagement in ABCD are in the context of global missions in Africa. These articles were reviewed, but the context was so different that application was deemed immaterial. The popular level books seem to either elevate to the level of the whole city when talking about kingdom building or Shalom, or these books would talk about neighboring as individuals in your everyday life. There is a missing middle at the neighborhood level aimed at churches engaging in neighborhood revitalization to bring wholistic restoration to their marginalized neighbors (Holt loc 361; Van Gelder and Zscheile loc 2713, 4882). Some early pioneers have led the way in leveraging ABCD as a way for churches to love their neighbors in disinvested neighborhoods. This literature review will take a look at three—Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), Focused Christian Ministries (FCS), and Shepherd Community Center (SCC). While these are most assuredly not the only churches, associations, or ministries engaging under-resourced neighborhoods in wholistic ministry to marginalized neighbors, they represent the ones known to the researcher to have extant literature or formalized processes that have been shared publicly. Their learnings over the past thirty

years will be summarized here to address the ministry problem of churches engaging in neighborhood revitalization.

### **John Perkins and Christian Community Development Association**

In 1989, the same year McKnight and Kretzmann began their listening tour in neighborhoods all over America, the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) was officially launched in conjunction with its first national conference. CCDA has been unofficially operating as a loose network of like-minded leaders for nearly a decade, and the foundation for the movement had been laid for ten to fifteen years beyond that (Gordon and Perkins 27-37). The seeds from which CCDA would grow to maturity came from the life experience of the catalytic leader John Perkins. He grew up in generational poverty in rural Mississippi. Perkins not only witnessed firsthand the need for community development but lived in a community, neighborhood, and family that would be considered under-resourced (Perkins, *Let Justice Roll* 32). People all around him faced barriers to loving God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength. Perkins felt the devaluing of segregation, working a field he could not own for ten cents a day, and within a justice system that allowed his brother to be killed by a white police officer with no repercussions (33-37). In this reality, John Perkins seemed to have two options: stay and become stuck in a society where he would be marginalized or escape from the community he was born into.

John Perkins initially chose the route of escape. He left Mississippi for California where he was able to start afresh with little of the systemic trappings he had experienced growing up in Mississippi. In his own words, in California he found “A great job, a nice house, a safe community, a growing family—in many ways I was a black man in pre-

Civil Rights America living the American Dream” (Gordon and Perkins 17). Despite these benefits, something was missing from his life. At the age of twenty-seven, he was introduced to the great love of God through Jesus Christ, and he gave his life to the Christian faith. All of the pieces were now in place for the nebula expressions of Christian Community Development to be born (23).

From the lived experiences of John Perkin’s life emerged the three R’s—Relocation, Redistribution, and Reconciliation—that became the fundamental values of CCDA:

- (1) Relocation (Perkins, et al, *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, 75): The act of moving into the neighborhood in which one will be ministering and doing community development work. This includes people who have never been a part of the community as well as those returning after a time away. Later it was recognized that those consciously choosing to remain in the neighborhood their whole lives were a critical piece of relocation that was lost in the name. The commonality between them all is the intentional decision to live in a neighborhood.
- (2) Redistribution (107): The act of pooling and sharing resources in a community to increase the overall quality of life of residents in the neighborhood. Redistribution also includes advocating for systemic changes such as fair wages, increasing job access for residents, and educational opportunities for neighbors.
- (3) Reconciliation (139): Racial reconciliation began as the heartbeat of this value as it was born in the segregated South and developed through the Civil Rights movement of the 1960’s. Expansively, however, it means bringing together all

people who are divided by false barriers whether they be gender, class, economics, ethnic, ideological, or other perceived divisions.

The Three R's are rooted deeply in the testimony of Scripture and informed by the Gospel which is why the CCDA movement was distinctly recognized as Christian. Relocation is tied closely to the doctrine of the Incarnation (Gordon and Perkins 46-47). God sent his son to be born into the world in first century Palestine among the Jewish people. He took on flesh and lived among a particular people in a particular time and place. Jesus relocated from heaven to earth. Under CCDA principles, three different ways to relocate have been identified—Relocators, Returners, and Remainers (48-51). Redistribution draws from Jesus' earthly ministry which was marked by distributing his presence and led to healing, feeding, friendship, and forgiveness. The Sermon on the Mount lays out a new economy, one that turns over the human understanding of who is powerful and who is blessed. The earliest followers of Jesus recorded in Acts are said to have taken everything in common so as to have none who were in need (2.44; 4.32). Redistribution should not be understood in ideology with socialism but rather in the praxis of Christ-centered community (Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities* 140-142). Finally, Jesus' entire mission could be described as Reconciliation—reconciling heaven and earth. His greatest purpose was in repairing the relationship between God and His creation (Snyder and Scandrett 123). The Cross and Resurrection are the great equalizers of humanity, the two cornerstones of the Christian confession of faith, and produce a view of reality that declares that “There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3.28). CCDA applies the Biblical idea of reconciliation in neighborhood revitalization through three distinct forms: people

with God, people with other people, and people groups with other people groups (Gordon and Perkins 62). Relocation, Redistribution, and Reconciliation, while not missing from Assets Based Community Development, are made explicit in the CCDA approach and move the conversation of community development directly into the Christian Worldview.

Over the next twenty-five years, CCDA continued to grow and evolve as a movement. The launch of the first conference in 1989 was the culmination of a decade of pulling practitioners together in formal and informal ways, serving as the beginnings of an association (Gordon and Perkins 33). Those relationships preceded another decade of trial and error on the ground in neighborhood ministry, occurring largely in isolation and in ignorance of what others were doing (36). Once the annual conference was locked in and underway, the people of God living out the CCDA values now had a rallying point. The leaders who before had felt alone in their work of the wholistic restoration of people through the vehicle of Community Development now felt like they belonged to a tribe. What's more, the language used by John Perkins to explain CCDA now had a platform through which others could adopt and reproduce the practices (38-45).

The other enormous benefit of the annual conferences was that it provided a learning community from which best practices and the sharing of failures could emerge. Over the last twenty-five years, the larger learning community has expanded the three original CCDA values of Relocation, Redistribution, and Reconciliation into eight core values that unite Christian faith communities pursuing the complexities of community development (Gordon and Perkins 45). The added five values that emerged were:

- Wholistic Approach
- Leadership Development



- Empowerment
- Church-Based
- Listening to the Community

The eight core values of CCDA represent a mode of being for a Christian faith community more than a systematic approach to community development (Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities* 211). In this way, other systematic approaches can be adopted, or incorporated and adjusted, in order to best bring about transformational change for the neighborhood. For example, a group of disciples could follow the ABCD approach for community engagement in an under-resourced neighborhood while living out the eight core values of CCDA. Indeed, the ABCD approach is a tool with which to live out the value of ‘Listening to the Community’ (Gordon and Perkins 104-106). The CCDA and ABCD intersect here as many CCDA communities utilize the ABCD approach to best enact neighborhood revitalization. To put it simply, CCDA better answers the “who we are to be” as a Christian faith community while the ABCD approach better explains the “how-to” of community development work in a neighborhood.

The outlier found in the CCDA values is ‘Church-Based.’ While relocation, redistribution, reconciliation, leadership development, empowerment, wholistic approach, and listening to the community find clear correlations to ABCD, being a church-based movement differentiates the CCDA from other community development approaches (Gordon and Perkins 120-21). Mary Nelson calls the church the “Gas, guts, and glue,” of community development. “The gas provides the energy, the guts provide the purpose, and the glue keeps everyone on track, moving in the same direction” (122). This view

provides an argument for the role the church can play within the community development process of a neighborhood. If one were to plug it into an equation, the equation could look like this:

$$\text{CHURCH (Purpose + Vision + Energy)} = \text{Neighborhood Revitalization.}$$

The Church, which brings its own set of motivations that fit alongside ABCD, acts as a multiplier to see generational cycles of poverty and brokenness with a community restored to an abundant life (Gordon and Perkins 135; Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities* 165-68). The mission recorded as the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John was that he came so that we could have life and life abundantly (John 10.10). The Church is uniquely positioned by virtue of its near universally accepted purpose of making disciples of Jesus to carry out ministries to those who do not have abundant life and to set them on a restorative path. The end destination of this path is not survival but to live a life of Biblical abundance from the inside out as defined by the fruit of God's Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5.22-23). As formation in Christ occurs in a local congregation, Church can serve as the mobilizing and sustaining presence within a neighborhood to build the community from the inside out.

While drawing out what the church's role in ABCD is important, this process does not answer the question of how to mobilize and sustain churches themselves into community development work. Similar to Nelson's explanation of the church as the gas, guts, and glue of neighborhood revitalization, Jay Van Groningen discusses the church's role in ABCD. He states that the Church is the bearer of the values of God's original creation and that the primary role of the church is to convene neighbors toward God's

vision. He even takes this concept a step further, arguing that churches provide the relationships through which individuals can be wholistically restored to God as neighborhood ministries create kingdom impact (40). This concept broadens the ministry of CCDA from what is classically understood as evangelism to also now include discipleship. When an individual or community is wholistically restored, they face less barriers to their relationship with God and can then participate in communion with the saints as part of a local church body where they can continue growth into the likeness of Christ (Gordon and Perkins 137-38, 150-51).

In the Perkins/CCDA literature, a gap is seen between the broad theological concepts and Biblical foundations and the practice of neighborhood community development work. For example, when discussing the church-based value of CCDA, speaking about “claiming responsibility” for the neighborhood, the statement is made that the church is responsible for more than just evangelism, discipleship, and spiritual nurturing—the church should also include loving and serving neighbors (Gordon and Perkins 123). This responsibility is placed in the commands of Jesus and the witness of the early church in Acts 2 and 4. While “neighbor” can easily be argued from the cited texts, “neighborhood” is clearly a stretch. What’s more, when referring to what the church actually does in the neighborhood, both passages reverts back to principles that can be lived out anywhere in anyplace—friendship, hospitality, deliverance, worship, and unity (Gordon and Perkins 126; Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities* 220). A Christian is left asking: Why church-based community development specifically? What are the motivations for why the Church, the assembly of the people of God, should first

engage in the work of community development, and how it can sustain neighborhood work within the congregation itself?

The CCDA model for church-based neighborhood revitalization focuses on churches within the neighborhood as the backbone support for wholistic restoration. This focus correlates with the core CCDA value of Relocation. The Incarnational approach to ministry challenges the church to be among the people to whom they hope to minister, to be alongside them, to live and dwell next to them in proximity, and to be with them as they work to raise their quality of life (Perkins, *Beyond Charity* 157, 177). Much of the stories of success within the CCDA community shared in literature and curriculum come from churches inside the geographical borders of the community development initiative, most of which were church plants specifically designed to live out the values and do the work of CCDA (39-43). This occurrence is an encouraging development. Too many churches left neighborhoods along with other sustainable resources during the decades of the suburban sprawl (Van Gelder and Zscheili loc 603).

However, a hanging question is left of what are the rest of the people of God within a metropolitan region to do if they desire to continue as a part of their local church and wish to engage in the wholistic restoration of the marginalized in communities through neighborhood revitalization. An argument has been made that from a Biblical perspective, restoring the marginalized of a given community is not merely a menu item of choices for churches but who the church is called to be as disciples of Jesus. The question is then raised: How can churches from outside the community contribute to the community development work with a neighborhood where they are not physically present? Ron Sider, John Perkins, Wayne Gordon, and Albert Tizon explore this in-depth.

They make a case for the ‘where, why and how’ of Christian community development initiatives for suburban-urban church partnerships in restoration (125-36). Missing from the exhortation is any research on what mobilizes and sustains church engagement in neighborhood revitalization.

CCDA remains the loudest voice in America advocating for Christians to engage in the process of community development. In the near future, CCDA is looking to create more opportunities for life-on-life interaction and training (Gordon and Perkins 179-80). Another explanation is that of discipleship in the larger context of helping followers of Jesus join with God in His mission of reconciliation. Aside from continuing with the National Conferences where inspiration, teaching, and sharing of best practices occur, over the last decade more offerings have emerged. The CCDA Institute is referred to as the educational and training arm of the association and also offers workshops. In 2007, the Immersion experience, a week-long training in Chicago, allows participants to be immersed in the CCDA values and gain learning alongside practical skill equipping. This led to the formation and release of *Immerse* which is CCDA’s attempt to go mobile and deliver their missional education where people are—a web-based training experience of their Immersion program. In addition, Community Based Advocacy, the Flourishing Neighborhoods Initiative, and Regional Networks are also mentioned as new or experimental ways to mobilize followers of Jesus into community development work, but these initiatives are not clearly defined and difficult to connect to as an individual, church, or organization (180-182).

### **Robert Lupton and Focused Community Strategies**

Dr. Robert Lupton is the visionary leader and founder of FCS in Atlanta. His voice has contributed to CCDA since before its official inception. His collective body of work can be summarized as helping move the mindset of Christians and churches away from personal and community betterment and toward personal and community betterment in their charity work. Lupton tells a story that encapsulates the shift in his own mind—while running a Christian non-profit where people of relative affluence served in urban ministry settings, Dr. Lupton saw clearly the impact of toxic charity (*Toxic Charity* 11-13). One of the ministry opportunities was to buy gifts and bring them to families in need. After years of operating this way, he began to notice a pattern of behavior in fathers who were present in the home: the father would always retreat from the room. The kids would be ecstatic over the presents, the mothers would typically grin and bear the experience for the sake of their children, but the fathers could not stand to watch. They were being emasculated in front of their children and the message that they could not provide for their family was reinforced. These small inconsequential interactions that seemed to be acts of good will were examples of the thousands of everyday ways in which systems set paths toward lives of dependency and generational poverty (51; Lupton, *Theirs is the Kingdom* 72). In response to these realities, Dr. Lupton shifted the leadership of his organization from Christians producing acts of good to Focused Community Strategies (FCS) for transformation within under-resourced neighborhoods.

The first move for FCS was to identify focus areas and get proximate to the ones they were hoping to serve. In a simple but powerful move, they relocated their offices and center of operations to their focus neighborhood (*FCS*, “Who We Are”). This move

changed the perception of neighbors. The FCS was no longer a group of people coming in to affect change for residents, instead they became new neighbors hoping to make change alongside, among, and with the residents. FCS moved from the suburbs, the very reason for urban disinvestment, back to the urban core in order to be present among the marginalized immediately increasing the value of the neighborhood by virtue of the human resourcing, work activity, and network of relationships, in addition to the physical investment of a restored office building (*FCS*, “Who We Are”). Possibly the greatest benefit of the relocation was the increased interaction with neighbors. A hypothesis of this dissertation is that trust is one of the markers of a genuine relationship, and relocation allows for a higher volume of interaction between people, a key ingredient in the formula of creating the outcome of trust.

The identification of FCS’s first neighborhood was predicated largely through the development of natural relationships in their various outreach ministries. After ten years of running programs into the neighborhood, residents from Summerhill started getting involved in their church programs (Lupton, *Toxic Charity* 62-63). This phenomenon is a point of contention regarding the mission of the church; in many respects this could be considered a successful ministry of a local congregation—people from under-resourced neighborhoods coming out to churches regardless of location. However, the observation of Lupton and his team was that the church-based services and programs being run were diverting money away from the poor, were based on the deficiencies of neighbors instead of their capacities, and displaced people’s abilities away from solutions for their neighborhood (Lupton, *Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life* 57). These beginning observations led to the toxic charity philosophy of FCS ministries. While a trickle of

individuals from Summerhill were getting involved in church programs, the vast majority of the community were not experiencing wholistic restoration. More concerning, the few who ended up getting connected to the church were activated in service to help run programs within the church instead of being mobilized to restore and love their neighbors (104-105). Residents from Summerhill serving in a Guest Services church program in the suburbs were not using their talents and giftings to welcome neighbors in Summerhill. This reality was ultimately the motivation for FCS to move into the neighborhood.

The decision was made to move FCS operations into Summerhill and to work on developing community-friendly churches. This shift in perspective and proximity meant motivating and mobilizing churches to be exemplars of Christ within the neighborhood (Lupton, *Toxic Charity* 121). The discipling of followers of Jesus to love God and love neighbors in Summerhill where they reside and without the expectation of extraction in order to experience this love made the opportunity for discipleship and engagement in mission available to neighbors themselves. They in turn could love God and love their neighborhood as they followed community-friendly churches in the way of Jesus. In this way, the church could begin to move away from a posture of traditional service, labeling one group as the “haves” and the other as the “have nots.” The new reality of engagement proclaims under-resourced neighbors as friends, brothers, and sisters, and an all-inclusive family for the neighborhood (Lupton, *Theirs is the Kingdom* 98-100). No discussion on quantifying numbers of churches who reached this community-friendly designation exists in the literature though it remains the aspirational goal for church engagement through FCS.



The discipleship of an entire neighborhood reframes the question of who the church is. The missional conversation asks what God is up to in a neighborhood and encourages churches to join in with those activities. Seeing the neighborhood as the parish activates a more expansive view of God's people; they are all his sons and daughters ready to act as ministers of reconciliation (Gordon and Perkins 127-31). The aim then is for the church not to be an outside force acting upon the neighborhood but to be a vital part of the neighborhood—acting/serving as a moral compass and spiritual strand within the community—transforming it from the inside out as a part of the extended network of relationships and/or family (Lupton, *Theirs is the Kingdom* 74-78; Escobar loc 946). However, the impetus is on FCS to bring this missional understanding between the Summerhill neighborhood and the community-friendly churches. The view taken by FCS assumes the universal nature of the church is to pursue the Mission of God and connect to their ministry not necessarily to mobilize and sustain localized churches in community development work.

Possibly the most enduring legacy of Robert Lupton and the FCS ministry will lie in the framing of how long-term personal betterment of under-resourced neighborhoods contributes to dependency and generational poverty, what he deems as Toxic Charity (Lupton, *Charity Detox* loc 249-67). The framework enables churches to enter into a self-critique of whether they are contributing to systems and cycles of generational poverty or helping to move individuals and communities toward the wholistic restoration in which God has always called his people to participate. This self-critique is accomplished through what has been coined the 'Oath for Compassionate Service' (Lupton, *Toxic Charity* 128):

1. Never do for the poor what they have (or could have) the capacity to do for themselves.
2. Limit one-way giving to emergency situations.
3. Strive to empower the poor through employment, lending, and investing; using grants sparingly to reinforce achievements.
4. Subordinate self-interests to the needs of those being served.
5. Listen closely to those you seek to help, especially to what is not being said—unspoken feelings may contain essential clues to effective service.
6. Above all, do no harm.

While this understanding is vital in providing the framework for churches to engage in neighborhood revitalization, missing from the discussion is the process through which churches and Christians can meaningfully engage in a pathway to move from betterment to development.

Currently FCS has helped, or is actively participating in, five neighborhoods in Atlanta. In their 2015 Annual Report, they shared that they now focus on four pillars for strategic change in under-resourced neighborhoods: Mixed-Income Housing, Economic Development, Neighborhood Engagement, and Training and Consulting (FCS, “Empowering Neighborhoods to Thrive” 4-5). These four pillars are built upon three core values (“Who We Are”).:

- (1) Neighboring—We value local living, believing proximity and diversity allow for mutually transformative relationships.

(2) Dignity—We value the gifts and abilities of our neighbors, believing as bearers of the image of God, they have inherent capacity and are engaged as full participants in bringing about the flourishing of the neighborhood.

(3) Development—We value sustainable strategies, believing that lasting impact requires addressing systemic, economic, and structural barriers to flourishing.

As is evidenced from their history and the literature, the work of FCS is faith-inspired. Their work is a connection-point of engagement for individual disciples of Jesus. However, how mobilizing and sustaining local congregations fits into their overall strategy or the future of their work in neighborhoods is not as apparent.

### **Shepherd Community Center**

The final case explored here is the Shepherd Community Center located in Near Eastside neighborhood in Indianapolis, IN. Shepherd is an important study, because they have been mobilizing the church into neighborhood revitalization and sustaining them in that work for over thirty-three years. Similar to the origins of FCS, Shepherd Community Center began as a ministry arm of a suburban church compelled by the discipleship of Jesus to love marginalized populations in the disinvested neighborhoods of Indianapolis (Height). However, diverging from FCS, when the decision was made to become proximate to the people they desired to minister to, the vehicle for mission was a church plant as opposed to a non-profit parachurch ministry. Central Nazarene Church was the sending church partnered with the Westside Church of the Nazarene, and they planted in the neighborhood in 1986. Beginning with what was known, the church simply started with outreach to the surrounding community using the programs they already had in place—such as feeding and clothing ministries (*Shepherd Community Center* “History”).

The important distinction was that they were now planted and rooted inside of the community. Ministry was not something they were doing *for* the neighbors but *with* them.

The shift toward community development for Shepherd happened gradually. The director of Shepherd, Jay Height, said that it took seven years before they began to develop the real trust of residents in the neighborhood. It was around ten years of doing mercy—personal betterment—ministries within the neighborhood before they began to see the importance of moving toward development and the wholistic restoration of neighbors and the neighborhood. The church continued the same ministries it had provided from a distance in the suburbs but were now closer in proximity and were building relationships with real people with real stories. They were no longer outsiders coming in to dispense services; they were now one of the neighbors helping out from next door. At least this was how the congregation operated as a whole. The actual relocation of individual members into the neighborhood was a slow process that began with the gravitational pull of the ministries over decades of consistency. Once the church was close to their neighbors, the truth became apparent that simply providing charitable service would not bring the wholistic restoration they hoped to see, and expected, from the transformative power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Height). The important note here is that even though Shepherd as a church was not necessarily operating in direct connection to an ABCD approach in those early years, they were building genuine relational capital with the surrounding community and their neighbors.

In 1988, the Nazarene church plant decided to relaunch as the Shepherd Community Center. Now the forward-facing organization to the surrounding community

was a neutral convener, a shared asset of the community, providing goods, services, and programs to their neighbors. The church was still the backbone of the movement and continued to exist in name and to host Sunday services (*Shepherd Community Center* “History”). The church was also the dominant resource, both human and financial, for the operation of the community center. The church and the community center still coexist to this day in a sort of symbiotic relationship where the one would not exist without the other yet they remain two distinct entities. There are church members not connected to the community center, and many neighbors engaged through the community center that have never attended the church. Another important note regarding church engagement is that Shepherd saw the name change as an opportunity to engage more local churches in the restorative work they had begun in the under-resourced neighborhood. The neutral name not only allowed for the surrounding neighbors to engage but removed denominational barriers and misplaced proprietary concerns from local congregations both within and outside their geographical focus area (Height).

Shepherd Community Center pivoted in 2007 and adopted a Continuum of Care whose mission is to, “Break the cycle of poverty in the near Eastside of Indianapolis by engaging and empowering the community to cultivate healthy children, strong families, and vibrant neighborhoods through a Christ-Centered approach that meets the physical, emotional, spiritual, and academic needs of our neighbors” (*Shepherd Community Center* “History”). This more focused approach came slowly, beginning in 2000, with the recognition that in order to break generational cycles of poverty, heavy investment would need to be made in the youth, the next generation of neighbors, building interventions ensuring that services and programs are wrapped around kids and families and allowing

them to meet success in life (Southerland). The Continuum of Care allows Shepherd Community Center to be continuously engaged in the lives of neighborhood children, teens, and parents. This wholistic approach is designed to meet any and all challenges their neighbors face.

Another pivot occurred in 2015. After fifteen years of focusing on youth and twenty-five years of building up the community center, the observation was made that bringing youth and families in would only take the surrounding community so far toward restoration, meaning they would need to journey out into the neighborhood. This observation led to the adoption and integration of the Shalom Project. Shepherd sees the Shalom Project as an extension of their mission, core values, and Continuum of Care into the neighborhood (Southerland). Those core values are: A Christ-Centered life of faith, an attitude of hope, a dedication to service, an unwavering focus on mission and purpose, a commitment to community, and a desire for complete health and wholeness (*Shepherd Community Center* “History”). The Shalom Project itself focuses on three strategic emphases aimed at the wholistic restoration of individuals and communities: (1) Feed the Hungry, (2) Promote Health, (3) Improve Housing.

Throughout these iterations of Shepherd, the faith community has continued to be central to neighborhood revitalization efforts. As mentioned above, the church plant has remained intact, still holding Sunday services and connecting their congregants to the overall efforts. Church partnerships have continued to be a focus for Shepherd, both recruiting and receiving prospective churches into the work. Although when asked directly about the efficacy of church partnerships, specific numbers of engagement of local churches, and mobilization plans for church partnerships, the response was

ambiguous (Height, Southerland). The engagement of churches into the work of neighborhood revitalization seems more of a byproduct of their activity and desire to live out a Christ-centered wholistic approach to ministry than any formal plan or approach to mobilization.

### **Research Design Literature**

The narrative of the literature review aims to show a need for increased engagement by local churches in neighborhood revitalization. The gap in research focusing on mobilizing and sustaining church engagement in neighborhood revitalization in scholarly journals and articles in the context of urban America provides the rationale for a pre-intervention study. The research design is intended to discover initial motivations that serve to catalyze movers for neighborhood engagement as well as what may be potential sustaining forces and uncovering gaps of engagement for local churches. In order to accomplish the goals of the research, three different research tools will be utilized. The first being interviews with fifteen individual professing Christians who are actively participating in neighborhood revitalization in the Evansville metropolitan region. The second is a focus group of eight pastors on the Westside of Evansville where no formal initiative of neighborhood revitalization is underway despite the presence of a recognized under-resourced neighborhood on that side of the city. The final tool is a congregational survey designed to see the intersection of Belief Statements of the Christian faith, the View of the role of the Church, and frequency of personal Faith in Action. The four congregations participating in the survey are also located on the Westside of Evansville.

Using these three research tools, the hope is to provide data that triangulates a solution toward the ministry problem of churches engaging in neighborhood revitalization. Out of the data analysis, ministry implications will be offered to aid local congregations in participating in wholistic ministry to marginalized populations in urban centers. The literature review speaks to a growing need for research that contributes in the area of study regarding how to move churches into engagement and offers a research design to identify motivations and means of mobilization for local congregations.

### **Summary of Literature**

The summary of the literature review encompasses the Biblical and Theological foundations for the people of God to wholistically restore the marginalized dwelling among their communities, being today's rapid urbanization and subsequent rise of under-resourced neighborhoods where marginalized populations live, the presentation of Assets-Based Community Development as a framework to bring wholistic restoration to marginalized neighbors, and early pioneers utilizing the ABCD framework to engage churches and disciples of Jesus in neighborhood revitalization.

For Israel, the greatest pursuit of life was to love God with all of their being represented by the charge to love God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength. This charge was affirmed by Jesus as the Greatest Commandment or greatest way of life. Living within Israel was a group repeatedly lumped together who were at-risk or had significant barriers to loving God with all of their being due to the contextual realities of the Ancient Near East. This group was identified as the Orphans, Widows, and Sojourners. In a society that reflected an Agricultural-Patriarchy, the OWS were the landless and fatherless. Consistently throughout the Old Testament, appearing in the Law,



Prophets, and Wisdom literature, God calls his people to care for the OWS by adopting practices that restore their identity, dignity, and place within the larger community. Jesus fulfilled this wholistic ministry to the marginalized while incarnate in creation, repeatedly ministering to the whole being of those he encountered on the margins of society and reintegrating them into the faith community. The argument pulled from this Biblical survey and theological reflection is that the people of God are called and commanded to minister to the marginalized dwelling in their communities in a way that brings about restoration to all of their being—heart, mind, soul, and strength—and restores them into the family of God. The church continues this ministry as part of the discipleship process, following in the way of Jesus.

Contextualizing this call and command for the people of God today, an argument was made that the best correlation to the OWS in Israel are those experiencing generational poverty. Societal factors in a Consumeristic-Individualistic culture place significant barriers and challenges to loving God with all of their being. The heart, mind, soul, and strength summation of wholeness expressed in the Great Commandment correlates to the emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and physical parts that make up the whole of life referenced today. Many people experiencing generational poverty are concentrated in disinvested neighborhoods in urban centers where housing stock and overall cost of living match income levels. In order to fulfill the Biblical mandate of wholistic ministry to marginalized populations, churches must shift away from short-term personal betterment and toward the long view of community development, aiming to raise the overall quality-of-life for under-resourced neighbors and neighborhoods.

Over the past thirty years an innovative approach called Assets-Based Community Development has emerged that provides a framework aimed at restoring individuals and communities by focusing on the inherent dignity and value of neighbors living in disinvested areas of cities. ABCD is an approach that enacts practices to help communities build themselves from the inside out. In this way, ABCD aligns closely with God's will for the marginalized not merely meeting needs but providing wholistic restoration. Neighborhood revitalization affords churches the opportunity to journey out into the community and join with God in his reconciliation of all things especially as applied to his special concern for the marginalized. Some early pioneers have gone before, and their learnings over the past twenty-five years have helped set the table for more churches to engage in neighborhood revitalization work. The gap in the research in what catalyzes and sustains churches in neighborhood revitalization is what the following research aims to contribute toward.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter will outline the research methodology for the project. The nature and purpose of the project will briefly be revisited and the research questions will move the overall scope of inquiry forward toward solutions as to why the church is not mobilizing and sustaining neighborhood revitalization as a primary vehicle for ministry to marginalized neighbors living in urban centers of cities. The ministry context will be restated in light of its unique contribution to the research questions, instrumentation, and implementation. Finally, an argument will be made for the reliability and validity of the project design by giving specific criteria for data collection and analysis. In this manner the research methodology for the project will be made clear in anticipation of the evidence that will be presented from the research in chapter four.

#### **Nature and Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of the research was to discover motivating factors that will lead to sustainable engagement of the people of God in ministering to marginalized neighbors living in under-resourced neighborhoods in the metropolitan region of Evansville, IN. The nature of the research was aimed at locating theological and biblical perspectives, as well as factors of engagement for disciples of Jesus, that mobilize the Church into the mission of God (*missio dei*), specifically, into God's reconciling work among marginalized populations. This project is important to the practice of ministry because an approach to engaging in holistic ministry is necessary in aligning churches and disciples toward God's desire for the marginalized. Ministry in areas facing generational poverty

and systemic issues should move toward community development as opposed to remaining focused on personal betterment. Engaging in neighborhood revitalization through an assets-based community development approach can help move the ministry of churches toward the holistic restoration of individuals and communities, one that better reflects the reconciling work in which God has called his people to participate.

In order to engage in this research, a cross-section of participants was considered: pastors, individual practitioners and disciples of Jesus currently engaged in neighborhood work, and congregants of local churches. All three groups completed a twenty question survey created by the researcher which was designed to observe the relationship between Belief Statements, View of the Church, and Faith in Action. The practitioners were interviewed in addition to taking the survey, and the pastors participated in a focus group. Both the interview and focus group questions were designed through an appreciative inquiry process and created by the researcher. Through the various samples and data collection tools, perspectives were collected from many angles providing a full picture of what catalyzes and sustains engagement in neighborhood revitalization as well as identifying potential barriers to such engagement.

In the missional literature and language surrounding more traditional church outreach, the assumption is that the marginalized will be cared for as part of the work of the church. However, a disconnect between the assumption of the role of the Church and the actual practice of holistically restoring marginalized neighbors exists. A growing awareness is occurring that these assumptions need to be revisited and given further attention and reflection in order to disassociate from 'toxic charity' which has contributed to generational poverty. The research is designed to find what moves followers of Jesus

into ministry to the least of these and how to sustain the ministry once among their neighbors.

### **Research Questions**

This section presents the three research questions designed to address the ministry problem of mobilizing and sustaining church engagement in neighborhood revitalization. The rationale will be shared pertaining to how the individual research questions provide evidence for tackling the ministry problem as well as the way in which research instruments specifically respond to the research questions.

#### **Research Question #1**

**What Biblical themes and understandings move the People of God into sustained ministry to the marginalized?** In order to answer this question, the researcher first determined which Biblical themes and understandings motivate the people of God into ministry to the marginalized and then found a similar correlation to what sustains that ministry over an extended period of time. The one-on-one interviews with neighborhood revitalization practitioners and the congregants' responses to the Congregational Survey were the primary contributors in providing data for this research question. Focus group question number four provided supplementary data from the pastors.

The Congregational Survey used a five-point Likert Scale in the importance of seven Belief Statements (BS) for their everyday life (1 = Not at all Important; 5 = Extremely Important). The survey questions addressed beliefs in relation to classical doctrinal statements concerning the nature of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, laying a foundation for each Congregant's Biblical worldview. A five-point Likert Scale was also

used for the frequency of seven Faith in Action (FA) expressions in which Congregants had participated in over the last year (1 = Never; 5 = Often). This section addressed service and engagement in the community, narrowing toward ministry with marginalized neighbors and being present in under-resourced neighborhoods. The raw data from the mean scoring of the survey was taken into consideration, but the correlation analysis between the respondents' Belief Statements and Faith in Action provided the primary evidence for the first research question. Specifically, FAQ 6-7—the two Faith in Action questions dealing directly with frequency of ministry to marginalized neighbors and presence in under-resourced neighborhoods with the intention of living out their faith—were utilized to draw out Biblical themes and understandings that motivate and sustain engagement in neighborhood revitalization. A conditional breakdown was run for those responding 'Often-Regular' to FAQ 6-7, in order to see which of the Belief Statements rose to the top.

The one-on-one interviews with disciples of Jesus actively participating in neighborhood revitalization provided qualitative data for research question number one. There was no specific question explicitly asking what Biblical themes and understandings catalyzed and sustained their engagement, instead the researcher identified them within the responses throughout the interview. Interview question one (IQ 1) addressed initial inspirations and motivations for engaging in neighborhood work while IQ 2-4 addressed what sustained them in that work. Biblical themes and understandings stated in response to these questions were coded and collated in order to discover which ones emerged from the collective data set as mobilizing factors for Practitioners.

**Research Question #2**

**Where do people engage and sustain their neighborhood engagement among the marginalized of a community in their discipleship process?** In order to answer this research question, the researcher needed to discover what moved followers of Jesus to specifically care for the marginalized of a society with a focus in under-resourced neighborhoods and what keeps them coming back—neighborhood revitalization not being a ministry approach traditionally understood in generalized definitions of ‘outreach’ or ‘service’ for churches. Two different methods were used to address this question. The primary method being one-on-one interviews with disciples of Jesus currently active in neighborhood revitalization. The qualitative data from the interviews for the fifteen practitioners was heavily drawn upon to provide evidence for neighborhood engagement and its relationship to discipleship. IQs 1, 2, and 5 were utilized to address initial inspirations and motivations, and IQs 2, 3, 4, and 5 were utilized to help discover what keeps them engaged in neighborhood work. IQ 3 especially provided evidence as it directly asked what has sustained the practitioners’ engagement. The second method used in support of the qualitative data was a factor analysis of the congregants’ responses to the congregational survey. Factor analysis is a method used to identify structures (or factors or dimensions) that underlie the relations among a set of observed variables. This type of analysis is a technique that transforms the correlations among a set of observed variables into a smaller number of underlying factors containing all the essential information regarding the linear interrelationships among the original test scores. Factor analysis is a statistical procedure that involves the relationship between

observed variables and the underlying latent factors (CITE). In this way, factor analysis was used to better account for the underlying variance (causal impact) among the three different samples surveyed—congregants, pastors, and practitioners. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) scoring was utilized to group the factors identified by the survey participants. Running the factor analysis provided evidence for any difference in how the sample groups were interpreting the survey and the ways in which they might view the world differently in their current discipleship journey.

### **Research Question #3**

**What are potential gaps or reasons for non-engagement of church engagement in neighborhood revitalization?** In order to answer this research question, a focus group of pastors and a survey of congregants from local congregations was utilized. Both samples were pulled from the Westside of Evansville an identified under-resourced neighborhood is present within the larger community, but no formal neighborhood revitalization effort is currently underway. In addition, none of the churches or pastors themselves actively participate in neighborhood revitalization. The intention of the researcher was that in surveying congregants and collecting qualitative data from pastors, barriers to mobilization in neighborhood engagement of local churches would be identified.

All six focus group questions (FGQ) were utilized to provide evidence. However, FGQs 2, 4, and 5 were designed specifically to address research question number three from the perspective of organizational church leadership. The congregational survey was used to better understand the congregations' perspective. The survey used a five-point Likert Scale to identify agreement of congregants' View of the Church (VC) based on six



statements presented pertaining to the nature and activities of the church (1 = Strongly Agree; 5 = Strongly Disagree). The overall raw data from the mean scoring was taken into consideration. However, the correlation analysis between the congregants' View of the Church and Faith in Action provided the best evidence in support of research question number three. A conditional breakdown of VCQ 6 was run in order to see trends in Belief Statements and Faith in Action for participants indicating they 'Strongly Agree' that the church has a specific calling from God to restore the marginalized populations of a community. A comparative analysis was conducted on the View of the Church section and all the subsequent breakdowns for all sample groups—congregants, pastors, and practitioners.

### **Ministry Context**

The ministry context is the Evansville metropolitan region, specifically the under-resourced or disinvested neighborhoods within the city. Evansville is the third largest city in Indiana and has a population of approximately 125,000 in the city proper, 180,000 in the county and 350,000 in the metropolitan region. Evansville is situated centrally between four major US metropolis centers—Indianapolis, Louisville, Nashville, and St. Louis, all of which are within a driving distance of 2-3 hours. This creates an interesting dynamic in the transiency of the population. In the surrounding rural area, Evansville is seen as a destination for college, career, and opportunity, receiving this migration into its population. At the same time, for people who grew up in Evansville and graduated from its public-school system, the general feel is that upward mobility requires moving out of the city. The identity of the city then, is a mix of urban and rural sensibilities, acting as

both a magnet for rural migration into the city and a desire for natural residents to escape the rural background into a more urban setting.

Evansville was founded along the Ohio River in the river valley bordering Kentucky whose city of Henderson is included in the metro region. This fact is contextually important because the city lies alongside the North-South divide of America. Latent racism is ever-present in Evansville but rarely discussed. Segregation that was never official was put into practice via red-lining, bussing, and other systems that pushed African Americans and other minorities into under-resourced neighborhoods. For example, the Westside of Evansville is 94 percent white while the Tepe Park neighborhood on the Southside, having suffered the most from disinvestment, is 60 percent black and 40 percent white. These realities are contrasted by the overall lack of diversity in the city; Evansville in total being 83 percent white. There is an underlying lack of diversity and a presence latent racism that contributes to the overall disinvestment in Evansville's urban core neighborhoods.

The mission of God expressed through neighborhood revitalization is very much a felt need in Evansville. Most of the region's poverty is concentrated in a few select geographical areas within the urban core. This phenomenon followed the classic suburban sprawl pattern wherein people, resources, and investment went out from the center of the city to the areas of suburban development. The resulting disinvestment and lack of new development in the urban core led to affordable housing for low-income neighbors and those in economic poverty. Over a forty to fifty-year span, a proliferation of under-resourced neighborhoods slowly became a reality. Evansville received a federal Promise Zone designation in 2016, one of only twenty-two in the nation, based on the

combination of felt need and positive momentum. The geographical boundaries of the Promise Zone encompass twelve neighborhoods, 7,133 households, and approximately 22,000 residents. The majority of neighbors experiencing poverty live within the Promise Zone as 35.7 percent are below the poverty line (23.3 percent city, 13.4 percent nation).

The positive momentum that led to the Promise Zone designation was based on a few neighborhood revitalization efforts in the metropolitan region that had launched with some early success. In 2010, the local Habitat affiliate began a neighborhood revitalization effort in the Glenwood neighborhood. In 2012, One Life Church began the same process in the East End neighborhood of Henderson, KY. In 2013, the City of Evansville launched the Jacobsville Initiative through a lead agency in the neighborhood, and in 2017 Community One began a neighborhood revitalization effort in the Tepe Park neighborhood. All of these neighborhood initiatives utilized an assets-based community development approach and published Quality of Life Plans outlining resident-voiced, and the potential for resident-led, change. Individual disciples of Jesus were present throughout all levels of these revitalization efforts from leadership to participants to resident neighbors, and two local churches were deeply engaged, serving as backbone support for two of the neighborhood initiatives. This history of engagement coupled with the opportunity afforded by the Promise Zone designation and political will focused on revitalization of the urban core presents a unique opportunity for the Church of Evansville to catalyze and sustain the neighborhood revitalization work being done in the city in a way that brings direct attention to the real people that live in these neighborhoods.

Spiritually, the majority of citizens identify as Christian. According to a Barna Study done in 2016, 83 percent of residents ‘Identify’ as Christian while 49 percent ‘Participate’ in the Christian faith and 25 percent report being ‘Highly Engaged’ in their faith. This data is important when considering mobilizing and sustaining the church into neighborhood revitalization. The Barna Study also shows 96 percent agree that Christians have a responsibility to help meet the needs of others, but only 30 percent volunteer at church and 22 percent at a nonprofit. There is a disconnect between the knowledge of faith and participation in the mission of God. This data is crucial in researching how to mobilize and sustain the Church in neighborhood revitalization as the data may provide a clue as to the lack of ministry to marginalized neighbors if self-identified Christians adhere more to a cultural Christianity than are being shaped in their actions by a Biblical Worldview.

## **Participants**

### **Criteria for Selection**

The sample group of neighborhood revitalization practitioners, focus group pastors, and congregants participating in the survey were all recruited from local congregations in the Evansville metropolitan region that agreed to participate in the research. The practitioners were chosen due to their ongoing engagement in community development/neighborhood revitalization initiatives throughout the Evansville metropolitan region. They have been engaged either through their local church or motivated by their faith to serve through a formal civic engagement. As self-identified disciples of Jesus, they provided insight into neighborhood revitalization as part of their own discipleship pathway and outlet for missional impact. Both the pastors and congregations were selected from the

Westside of Evansville. This was an intentional criterion for selection as the Westside of Evansville currently has no revitalization effort underway even though a recognized disinvested neighborhood is located within— Howell Park—where concentrated poverty exists. All of the pastors and congregations were chosen because of their proximity to the Howell Park neighborhood. Each not only resides on the same side of town, but the physical locations of their churches are within a five-mile radius of the neighborhood itself. None of the pastors or participating congregations are connected to a formal process that engages their church in the neighborhood. This situation not only allowed for the pastors and congregants to provide data on reasons for non-engagement and/or potential gaps for engagement in neighborhood revitalization but also laid the groundwork for future engagement by these local churches in neighborhoods as a practice of ministry.

### **Description of Participants**

The participants can be described by three groupings: (1) Disciples of Jesus active in neighborhood revitalization efforts—practitioners, (2) Leaders overseeing local churches—pastors, (3) Local congregations—congregants.

- (1) Practitioners: The fifteen practitioners ranged in age between twenty-six and seventy-three, with distribution across all age ranges (Figure 4.1). Ten were male and five were female. Twelve were white and three were non-white. All but one of the interviewees hold higher education degrees and six have received graduate degrees. The practitioners invited to participate in the interview were the only ones known to the researcher who fit the criterion of Christians actively engaged in neighborhood revitalization efforts.

- (2) Pastors: The eight pastors who participated in the focus group ranged in age between thirty-five and sixty-eight years of age. Three had 0-10 years of ministry experience, two had 10-20 years, and three had 20-30 years. Five different denominations were represented among the eight participants. Six were lead pastors of their church and two were campus pastors of multi-site churches. All eight pastors lead churches on the Westside of Evansville where there is currently no formal neighborhood revitalization effort underway.
- (3) Congregants: The 160 respondents to the congregational survey were pulled from a sample of churches selected because of their physical locations being on the geographical Westside of Evansville where there is currently no formal neighborhood revitalization effort underway. Beyond this criteria, the four participating churches were the ones who agreed to by church leadership to take the survey. Three of the churches were planted since 2005, the other being over 150 years old. Three different denominations were represented among the four congregations.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Participants in the interviews and focus group completed a consent form. The consent form invited the practitioners and pastors to participate in the research study and assured them the researcher would strive to maintain their confidentiality. The form also indicated that their names would not be included in the study and their information, if used, would be represented by numbers and/or initials. Each were notified that if at any time while participating in the study something made them feel bad and they wished not to finish the study, they could stop whenever they wanted. The consent form also indicated that all of the

collected data would be stored on the researcher's password-protected personal computer and would be destroyed upon publication of the dissertation.

Survey Monkey was used for the Congregational Survey and administered via email to ensure greater anonymity. The survey also provided an informed consent form that the participants were required to agree to before moving forward. No personal information was collected from participating Congregants. The raw data collected from Survey Monkey was exported to a .pdf file and the results from the survey were stored in the researcher's password-protected personal computer. A designated backup drive was kept in the researcher's home in a fire-proof safe. Through these confidentiality measures the survey respondents were encouraged to be as forthcoming as possible with their responses.

### **Instrumentation**

The project utilized three different instruments, one for each of the sample groups: practitioners (interview), pastors (focus group), and congregants (survey). The interview and focus group questions were prepared by the researcher using Appreciative Inquiry methodology. These questions can be found in Appendix A. The survey instrument was also built by the researcher in order to discover the relationship between the congregants' affirmation of Belief Statements in their everyday lives, their agreement to statements regarding their View of the Church, and the frequency of their Faith in Action. All three sections used a five-point Likert Scale to indicate the congregants' importance, agreement, and frequency of the indicated statements presented. The practitioners and pastors also completed the survey in order to provide comparative samples. The full survey is included in Appendix B.

**Expert Review**

Since the instruments were built by the researcher, several levels of expert review were conducted to validate the research-designed tools. Sensing reports three options for piloting a questionnaire: three people taking the questionnaire and survey after which providing feedback, independent expert assessment, and field test (Loc. 2392). All three were utilized to gain confidence in the instruments. The independent expert assessment of the interview and focus group questions, as well as the survey, was conducted with the dissertation coach and administrative staff at Asbury Theological Seminary. Once the suggestions from each were implemented, revisions were submitted again for review and found acceptable. The interview and focus group questions, as well as the survey, were then sent to four ministry peers to review the instruments and provide further critique and feedback. Final adjustments were made and collectively the analysis proved each of these instruments valid and reliable for data collection.

**Reliability & Validity of Project Design**

The three different measurement tools were specifically designed to improve the reliability of the research. A mixed methods approach of qualitative (interviews and focus group) and quantitative (congregational survey) was utilized to support the research. The background experiences that create engagement in neighborhood revitalization efforts varies so greatly that a qualitative approach was necessary to allow the participants to articulate the nuances of their motivations. This reasoning is behind implementing the one-on-one interviews and focus group. In the one-on-one interviews, the same setting, time allocation, and questions were determined beforehand to create consistency. The rules for the interview questions were to simply take the research questions and use the



same language to connect the respondents to the ministry problem being addressed.

In the congregational survey, the correlation and relationship between Belief Statements, View of the Church, and Faith in Action was determined as necessary for mobilizing churches and individual disciples of Jesus into neighborhood revitalization as a vehicle to minister to marginalized neighbors. The Biblical Foundations presented and the themes that emerged from the literature review identified Biblical themes essential for understanding and participating in the Mission of God—Creation, Election, Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, and Kingdom. These themes were correlated to survey questions around Belief Statements in order to attempt to discover the importance of the beliefs in the everyday lives of the disciples of Jesus and in motivating their Faith in Action. The survey was reviewed by five ministry peers in the Evansville metropolitan region to assure their orthodoxy and relevance to the research questions. In addition, the protocol was reviewed by experts in dissertation research through Asbury Theological Seminary. These implementations ensured the reliability and validity of the project design.

### **Data Collection**

The data collected from the research was a pre-intervention, mixed-methods implementation which included a congregational survey tool for quantitative and qualitative data collected through one-on-one interviews and focus group questions, utilizing an Appreciative Inquiry approach.

The data from the research is confidential, but the identity of the participants in the survey, interview, and focus group will be known by the researcher. The instruments are provided in full above. The interviews and focus groups did not occur in public

arenas. The focus group was held in the conference room of the Grace Nazarene church, and the interviews were conducted in the conference room of the Community One offices. The rooms were secured by doors to ensure confidentiality. The conversations were recorded with an audio recording device on the researcher's MacBook Pro. Typed abbreviated notes were taken on the same computer as a backup method. The two institutions participating in the research are the Grace Nazarene Church and Community One. The letters of permission from the respective organizations' senior leadership were secured.

The instrumentation tool for the congregational survey was created through Survey Monkey and distributed online for assessment. The survey link was sent by the Lead Pastor of each congregation via email to their congregants and a one-week timeline was allotted to complete the survey before it was closed. The responses were collected through Survey Monkey. Once the timeline for response was completed, the data was exported via an Excel sheet and the survey was deleted from Survey Monkey.

The major findings of the research project will be shared with D.Min. cohort colleagues, ATS faculty, and church and pastors. The IRB informed consent letter template was used, and the final form is submitted in the proposal. The names and voice recordings will be listed in the personal records of the researcher. No other forms of identification needed to be collected.

### **Data Analysis**

The qualitative data from the practitioner interviews and pastor focus group was collected via audio recording and supplemented with annotated notes taken by the researcher during the conversations. Digital transcriptions of the interviews and focus

group were provided to track the audio recordings for ease of analysis. The data was reviewed multiple times in order to steep in the data and begin to explore what was shared. While this exploration was underway, the researcher made notes and citations of any insights, ideas, or questions that surfaced. After the initial exploration was complete, the researcher began identifying themes that emerged from the data and coding them in order to categorize the data into coherent groupings that addressed the research questions. These initial coded themes were further refined and separated into smaller groups of evidence that contributed insight into the ministry problem of mobilizing and sustaining church engagement in neighborhood revitalization. The final analysis was to present four major findings from the qualitative data that presented a coherent narrative which emerged from the research.

The quantitative data from the congregational survey was collected via Survey Monkey and exported to an Excel spreadsheet for analysis. The first step in this analysis was to provide the raw data through the mean responses of each survey question. This was done by assigning a 1 to 5 value on the Likert Scale. The standard deviation for each survey question was also determined. Together, the two provided descriptive statistics for the quantitative data. The next step was to do a correlation analysis between the three sections of the survey: Belief Statements (BS), View of the Church (VC), Faith in Action (FA). Pearson's  $r$  was used as the correlation coefficient to measure the relationship between the congregants' responses. In addition, three conditional breakdowns were analyzed. The first two were done with Congregants who responded 'Often' to FAQ 6-7. These two questions directly asked about the frequency of congregant's ministry to marginalized neighbors and presence in under-resourced neighborhoods. The Belief

Statements of these respondents were analyzed to address research question number one. The third conditional breakdown was done with congregants who responded to 'Strongly Agree' to VCQ 6 indicating the Church had a unique calling to minister to marginalized populations. The frequency of Faith in Action of these respondents was analyzed to address research question number three. The final analysis utilized for the congregational survey was a Factor Analysis run in order to discover any underlying relationships between the observed variables (survey questions) and latent factors in the worldview of the congregants. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin scoring from the Factor Analysis allowed the researcher to group the survey questions into buckets of interpretation by respondents. This provided supporting data for research question number two. The same analysis procedures were undertaken for the sample groups of practitioners and pastors completing the survey for comparative data. As this provided a wealth of raw data, only significant findings were presented in the presentation of evidence in chapter four.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

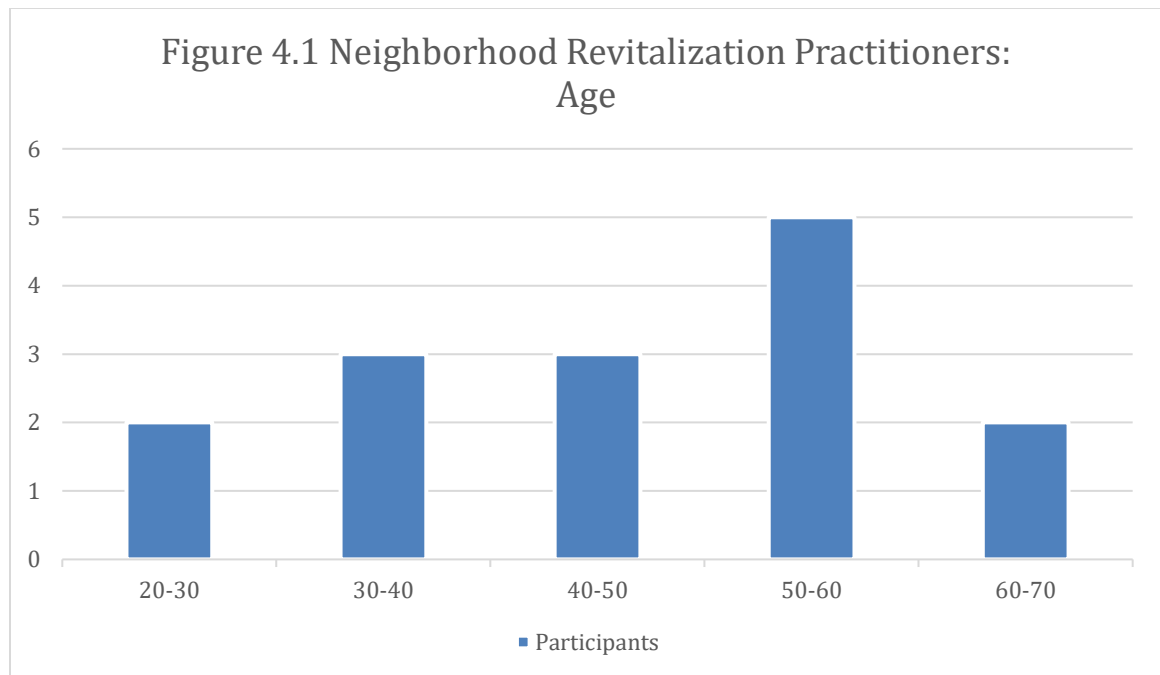
Evidence for the project will be presented in this chapter. Participants in the research, interviews, and focus group will be described. Profiles of participating congregations will be included as well. A presentation of the evidence will be provided for each research question outlining what was discovered through the conducting of the research as well as the analysis of important insights, quotations, and statistics using three unique tools. The chapter will conclude with a numbered list of major findings.

The research poses the question of how to mobilize the Church (the unified ‘catholic’ church) and churches (localized unique expressions) to sustain neighborhood revitalization in the context of under-resourced or disinvested neighborhoods in the Evansville metropolitan region. The problem can be framed around the reality that every urban core contains areas of disinvestment where poverty and injustice reign. This problem is found to be in opposition to the kingdom of God where the Lord’s Prayer states, “Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” This experience is not the everyday experience for neighbors living in these neighborhoods. As presented in Chapter Two, if the people of God are to restore the marginalized as an expression of our citizenship of heaven joining with God in his reconciliation of all things, then there must be a reframing of our missional imagination and local outreach including the wholistic restoration of neighborhoods throughout these cities. The research examines what motivates individual disciples of Jesus to participate in neighborhood work, a focus group of pastors living in a disinvested side of the city with no formal revitalization effort, and a

Congregational Survey examining Belief Statements and the view of the role of the church. The major findings fulfill the purpose of the research by proposing solutions to the problem of mobilizing and sustaining churches in neighborhood revitalization.

### Participants

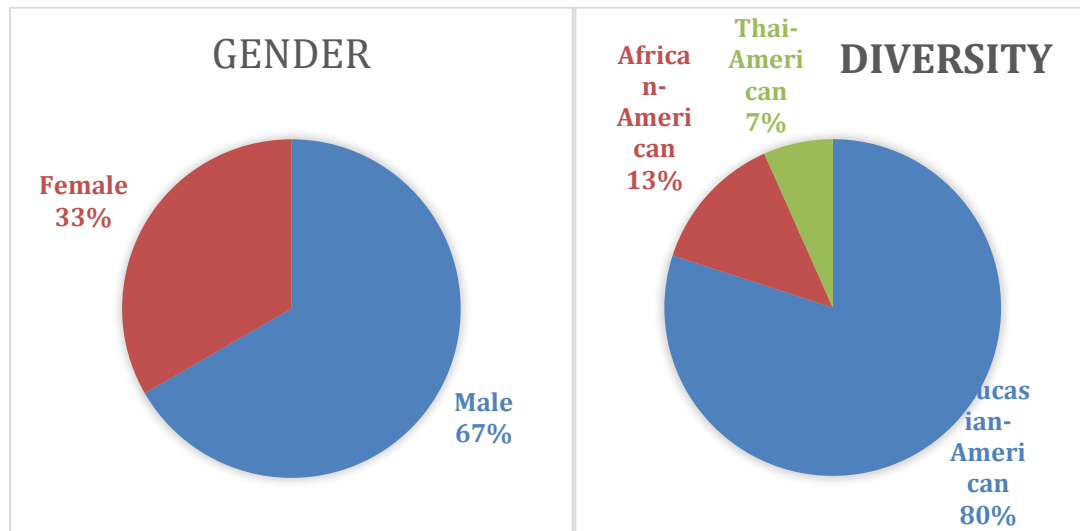
There were three participant samples, each utilizing one of three research tools: a one-on-one Interview, a focus group of local pastors from the Westside of Evansville, and a Congregational Survey. The one-on-one Interview consisted of ten men and five women, ranging in age between twenty-six and seventy-three years of age. Figure 4.1 shows the age distribution, while Figure 4.2 shows the diversity of the interview participants.



Of the fifteen, eleven work at non-profit organizations or foundations, three are on staff at local churches, and one is a professor at a higher education institution in the city. Twelve participants were white/Caucasian, two were black/African American, and one was a Thai-American. A representative mix among the participants in education levels and

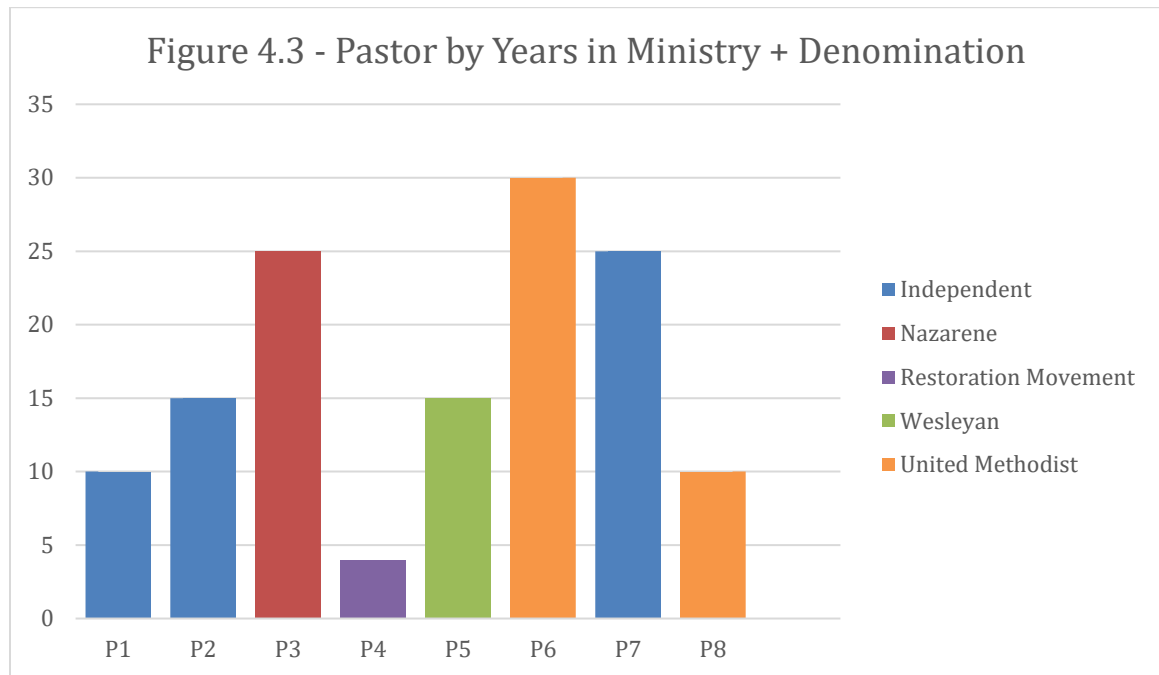
vocational positions was present, ranging from GED to Doctorate, and unemployed to the highest positional levels in their field. The common unifier is that all of them to some degree are engaged in revitalization efforts in under-resourced neighborhoods. All of the participants attend a local church in the Evansville Metropolitan region. They will be referenced throughout this chapter as ‘practitioners’.

**Figure 4.2 – NR Practitioners Diversity**



The focus group of pastors had eight participants. The pastors have a similar wide range of experience of vocational ministry and education background. These members reside on the Westside of Evansville where there is currently no formal or organized neighborhood revitalization effort underway. Of the eight, seven were male and one was female, ranging in age from thirty-five to sixty-eight years old. All participants were white/Caucasian. The racial diversity of the Westside of Evansville is 94 percent white/Caucasian. Six of the members were lead pastors of their respective congregations and two were campus pastors of multi-site churches. Four participants represented leadership of Independent Christian churches, two were with the United Methodist, one was with the Wesleyan church, and one was with the Nazarene church. Figure 4.3

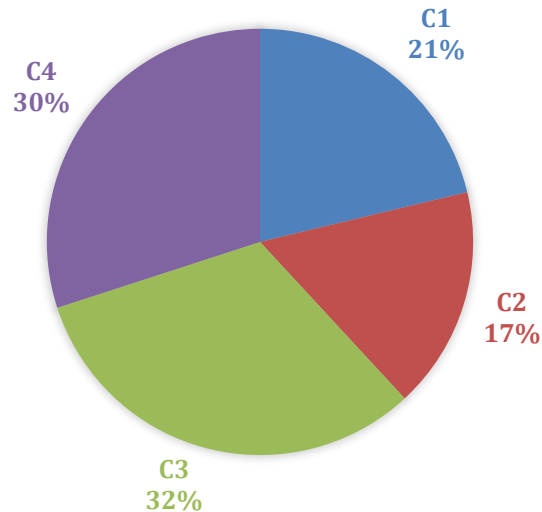
provides a visualization of denominational affiliation and years of ministry experience for the pastors. All participants live in the community in which they minister.



Four local congregations participated in the Congregational Survey resulting in 160 total participants. Figure 4.4 provides the percentage breakdown of respondents by the participating churches. No personal information was collected as the aim was to capture a collective congregational profile. The congregations range from eighty to four hundred in average Sunday attendance. Three of the participating congregations were relatively recent church plants, one being planted in 2005, one in 2010, and the other in 2012. While the church plants are all Independent Christian churches, their denominational roots or sending churches include Assemblies of God, Restoration Movement churches, and Southern Baptist. The other participating congregation is a Wesleyan church established in the nineteenth century, nearly 150 years old. The Westside congregations can be described like the side of town—homogenous. The Westside of Evansville is white (94 percent), blue-collar, and solidly middle class.



**FIGURE 4.4 - CONGREGANT RESPONSES BY CHURCH**



### **Research Question #1: Description of Evidence**

#### **What Biblical themes and understandings move the people of God into sustained ministry to the marginalized?**

The first research question was designed to discover what Biblical themes and understandings help move the people of God into sustained ministry to marginalized populations. Evidence from the research will be provided throughout the interviews with neighborhood revitalization participants, specifically interview questions (IQ) 1 to 4. Further supporting evidence will be presented from Question 3 of the focus group, mean scoring of the Belief Statements in the Congregational Survey, the correlation between Belief Statements and Faith in Action, and a conditional breakdown of survey questions FAQ 6-7 compared to the Belief Statements of the Congregational Survey data.

Five major themes emerged from the qualitative data collected during the fifteen interviews of individual disciples of Jesus actively participating in neighborhood revitalization. Table 4.1 shows the number of interviewees who mentioned the theme and

the total number of comments made throughout all the interviews. The themes are as follows: (1) Calling, (2) Sharing Faith, (3) Mission of God, (4) Hope, (5) Incarnation.

**TABLE 4.1 – Qualitative Data Interview Themes–Biblical Understandings**

Theme	# of Interviewees Mention	Total Frequency of Comments
Calling	15/15	24
Evangelism- Discipleship	15/15	71
Mission of God	13/15	48
Hope	12/15	34
Incarnation	12/15	25

**Calling.** Every interviewee mentioned a sense of calling in response to question one. Twenty-four different comments were made reflecting a call by God to step into the work of neighborhood revitalization either in a general sense as a Christian or in a specific sense as a unique call in their own life. These comments were supported by words such as: obedience, trust, faithfulness, and specifically “call” when describing what motivated or sustained their ministry among marginalized populations. Provided below are a representation of quotes from the data.

General:

- The motivation comes out of our love for God, viewing ourselves as children of God, as missionaries, the people of God are missing their calling by not engaging in neighborhoods.

- The LORD who called us to this work is present and working on every single person, including those living in under-resourced neighborhoods.
- I think initial motivations is where the spiritual call comes in. Really belief in the power of vocation, there is a call for you, God will pursue you like a hound of heaven, you will be a co-creator with God in this world.
- We are called to this work. Called to hard work. Not an option.

Specific:

- I'm called to the work, just being faithful. I feel perfectly in place and equipped to do this work.
- Conviction that it is where we are supposed to be. Recognizing that it's not an extra add on to life, but what we are called to do. Being engaged in vulnerable neighborhoods is something I am personally called to do.
- Quit my job to do the work! This is the movement or calling of God. Real clarity of I was equipped to step into this particular expression of Kingdom Work.
- Being convinced that there is a call. My life for this work.

**Evangelism-Discipleship.** The data pointed to Evangelism-Discipleship as one of the highest Biblical understandings and themes regarding the interviewee's draw toward neighborhood revitalization. All fifteen participants mentioned the desire to share their faith with others (evangelism) and the formation of their faith (discipleship) as reasons for engagement. Both themes are grouped together because the interviewees tended to blend any distinction between the two. In addition, the interviewees returned to the theme throughout all four of the interview questions that were intended to answer

research question one, resulting in the highest total number of comments (see Table 4.3).

Following are samples of the data broken down by interview question:

IQ 1:

- I wanted to help other disciples of Jesus experience the giving and receiving of love in all the directions of our work. See that they themselves are agents of love. Life-on-life evangelism and discipleship—growing in love and relationship with their Father. Continued growth and view of sanctification.
- It was a move of faith for me, showing simple acts of faith to the least of these, an opportunity to grow my faith, daily taking up my cross and denying myself.
- I simply wanted to show the love of Christ to others.

IQ 2:

- Spreading the Gospel.
- Moved into preach the gospel and advance the kingdom of heaven. This is exactly why we moved into the neighborhood. All sorts of expressions of religion, but are these kids hearing the Gospel?

IQ 3:

- Knowing that real meaningful Christian faith is being lived out, a space in my life where people can be invited into my faith.
- The opportunity to inspect my own motivations, worldview and see through the life of Jesus, reorient my life to neighbors, cherish them and their experience and personally grow from it. Couple that with the mandate from Jesus to love your neighbor as yourself.

IQ 4:

- Being completely and totally surrendered to God. Can even be harmful without Him and His Spirit.
- Key piece is understanding how the Gospel shapes who we are and what we do. Who does God say I am. Understanding of this identity is what has shaped me and engaged me in the neighborhood.
- I'm thinking more and more about flat out evangelism and discipleship. How can I step into the life of Christ and share that life with others?

**Mission of God.** Thirteen out of fifteen interviewees communicated that they were joining with God's work in the neighborhood. A clear sense was expressed that God is already active, or on mission, in the neighborhood and that their role was to follow Jesus into that work. This thought pattern was reflected in a host of comments not limited to: "God is moving in the East End...we get to be a part of God's movement...God's timing...God's current...God's hand...Christ's mission to reconcile all things...God aligning and directing people...we are merely contributing to what God is doing...". There was a deep belief that the God found in the metanarrative of Scripture who actively participates in restoration has continuity with the restoration they are experiencing through neighborhood revitalization. This Biblical theme and understanding was named as both an initial motivation and a sustaining factor.

Initial Motivation:

- For me it was obedience and submission to Christ's mission.

- I have always been both challenged and inspired by work of church that we are to bring about the reclamation of the kingdom to the way things were in the beginning. I wanted to apply this to the most under-resourced areas of our city.

Sustaining:

- God is aligning and directing people in His mission, I find great peace in that.
- Seeing the sermons and movement in the book of Acts, the spirit inside us drives us to the mission of God wherever we are.
- Ultimately God. Really believe that the neighborhood work is from Him, getting connected to that and staying connected to the mission of God, what God is actively doing.

**Hope.** Twelve of the fifteen interviewees mentioned hope in the scope of several questions. Hope produced by their faith served as a motivating factor, as what has sustained their engagement in the neighborhood, and as an important lesson in belief or step of faith gained by the engagement. The following quotes are presented as evidence of this pervasive theme:

- My engagement is rooted in the reality that God is a hopeful God.
- Wouldn't it be cool to see things the way God wants things to be, that Shalom would actually happen here on earth as in heaven. This is the hope we have.
- I would argue that we are to be bringers hope. Jesus did not come to save our souls to sit and wait. But we are to bring the kingdom to earth, help people see this hope tied to our faith.
- Want to get to the point where our neighborhood can be a model that gives hope to other neighborhoods and communities.

**Incarnation.** The final Biblical theme that emerged out of the question of what moves the people of God into sustained ministry to the marginalized was the Incarnation. Twelve of the fifteen stated that they engaged in neighborhood work because they were following the life of Jesus as given witness by Scripture. One response was particularly telling. An interviewee in her early thirties has been involved in neighborhood revitalization efforts since 2012 as a response to the testimony of Jesus' way of life found in the Gospels, stating:

I came to a crisis point in my faith in my early twenties. The faith I grew up with, understanding of church and the Christian life, was not connecting to my life. So I spent a whole summer reading through the life of Christ and the Shane Claiborne's of the world. It started this journey of asking what does it look like to live like Christ in the place where I am? The simplest answer, the one most clearly seen in Scripture, was to go where the marginalized are and start loving them.

A collective understanding existed among those engaging in neighborhood revitalization that the example of Jesus was the prime motivator. Following Jesus, seeing people like Jesus, reproducing the life of Jesus, sharing the love of Jesus, obeying the commands of Jesus, being dependent on Jesus to carry out the work—all were mentioned as catalysts to move into neighborhood work. This collective understanding shows a connection to the Incarnation as a doctrinal belief that motivates and sustains ministry to the marginalized. Further support is represented by the following remarks from the interviewees:

- Jesus did his ministry in a place. Was in Israel, among the Jews. Jesus was able to have a heart for a people. Our work in the neighborhood should reflect that.

- Jesus did not force things, instead loved them where they were, listening and talking the neighbors, figuring out what is good for the community, what do they want, how can I use my resources.
- My initial motivation for neighborhood work came as I dug deeper into life of Christ, natural outflowing of loving those people and wanting to be there as Jesus did.
- Entering into the neighborhood was following Jesus' example—seeing his heart of love, love Jesus had for the least of these, Jesus met them where they are. We do the same through the love of Jesus.

### **Input from Pastors**

Focus group question 3 asks: “What do you feel God’s heart is for the under-resourced neighborhood? What are the Biblical themes?” and is presented here as a check against the neighborhood revitalization participants’ Biblical understandings and themes. This question reveals important data to present in light of the larger ministry problem of how to mobilize and sustain church engagement in neighborhood revitalization as addressed by the research questions, given that the focus group of pastors on the Westside of Evansville are not leading congregations that actively participate organizationally in neighborhood revitalization nor are they personally participating in neighborhood work. The results are summarized as follows:

#### *Calling:*

- No comments or remarks were made around the idea of calling mentioned by the focus group.



*Evangelism-Discipleship:*

- Truth needs to be lived and proclaimed so God's heart can be shown in and to our neighbors

*Mission of God:*

- God's heart is broken for his people. His mission is to restore them to himself.
- The story of the Prodigal Son is a Biblical picture of God's heart for the neighborhood—standing on the front porch day after day until his son comes back. The story is a message of reconciliation, a ministry of reconciliation. This attitude is God's disposition towards individuals and communities.

*Hope:*

- God's heart is about hope. God wants us to know at least three things: God loves us, God is a God of abundance not scarcity, and that we must live in hope, hope for tomorrow and hope for eternity.

*Incarnation:*

- When I think about Biblical themes, I think of the Incarnation. God moved into the neighborhood as Eugene Peterson says. Jesus came to them, and gave his life for their redemption.

**Congregational Survey**

In addition to the qualitative data from one-on-one Interviews and the focus group, research question 1 was also addressed in the Congregational Survey. The survey consisted of twenty questions prepared by the researcher. These questions were broken down into three sections: seven questions concerning Christian Belief Statements (BS), six questions concerning the View of the Church (VC), and seven questions concerning Faith in Action (FA). The Congregational Survey was administered to four different congregations via Survey Monkey with a total of 160 respondents. Table 4.2 presents the mean response and standard deviation of each survey question. The fifteen neighborhood revitalization participants interviewed and the eight pastors participating in the focus

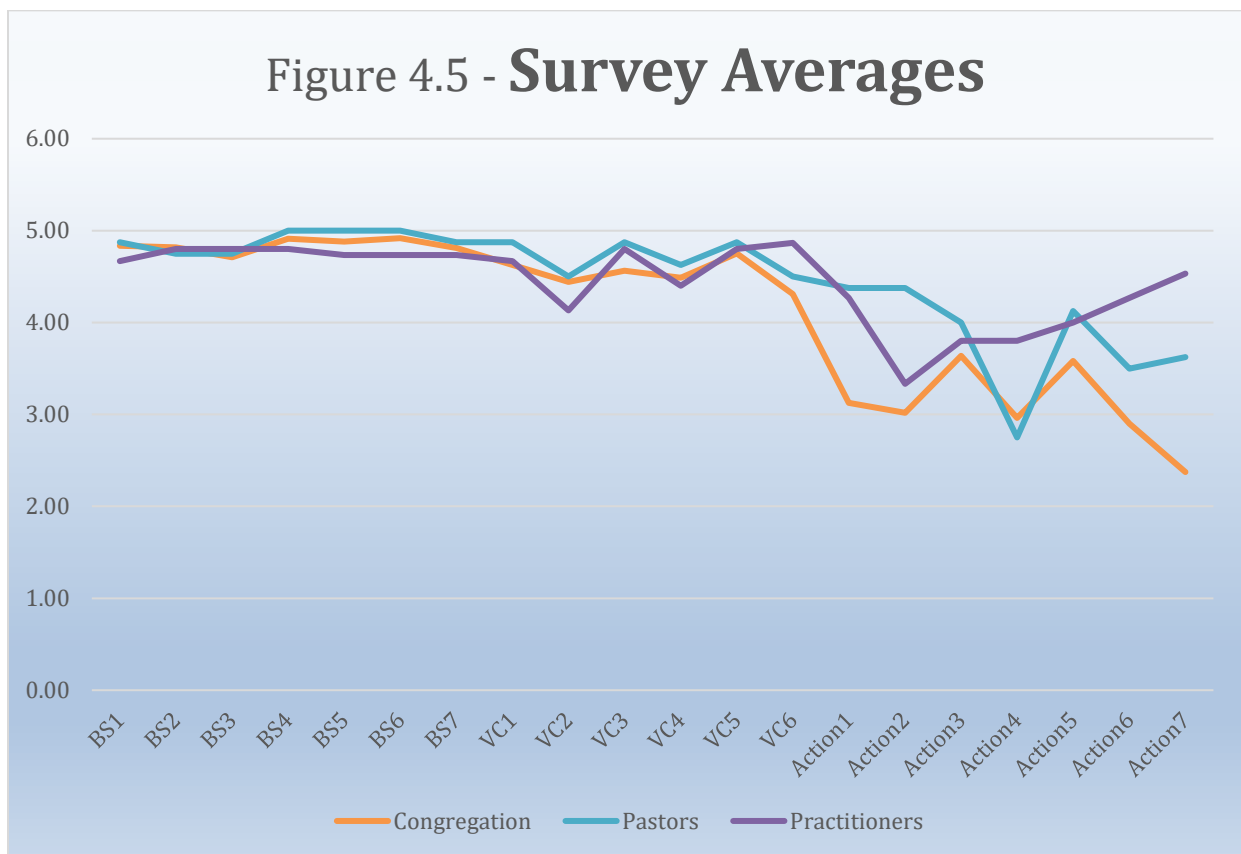
group also completed the survey to allow for comparative samples. Figure 4.5 shows the overall survey averages of all three sample groups.

**TABLE 4.2 – Congregational Survey Mean Responses and Standard Deviation**

Survey Question	Congregants <i>M (SD)</i>	NR Participants <i>M (SD)</i>	Pastors <i>M (SD)</i>
BSQ1 - I believe in the Holy Trinity. I believe in the one true God that eternally exists as three persons—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—and that these three are one God.	4.84 (0.57)	4.67 (0.62)	4.88 (0.53)
BSQ2 - I believe that God created all things through Jesus and all of existence is sustained by the Trinitarian God.	4.82 (0.61)	4.80 (0.41)	4.75 (0.46)
BSQ3 - I believe that God's Mission derives from His very nature—the Father sends the Son, the Father and Son send the Spirit, the Father, Son, Spirit send the church into the world.	4.71 (0.69)	4.8 (0.56)	4.75 (0.46)
BSQ4 - I believe the second person of the Trinity (the Son) assumed human form in the person of Jesus Christ, lived life among humanity, and is completely both God and man.	4.91 (0.36)	4.8 (0.56)	5 (0.00)
BSQ5 - I believe Jesus Christ was crucified for the rebellion of creation against God, for the purpose of reconciling all things to God.	4.88 (0.48)	4.73 (1.03)	5 (0.00)
BSQ6 - I believe Jesus Christ was raised physically from the dead on the third day following his death on the cross, appearing to many followers, and is the foretaste/sign of a future hope brought into the present reality.	4.92 (0.37)	4.73 (1.03)	5 (0.00)
BSQ7 - I believe that Jesus Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father and reigns over the	4.81 (0.57)	4.73 (0.80)	4.88 (0.35)

Kingdom of Heaven that is being established by God.			
VCQ1 - Church is a community of people with God, through Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, living life with one another locally, connected to all other Christians through the world and history.	4.63 (0.58)	4.67 (0.62)	4.88 (0.35)
VCQ2 - Church is the assembled or gathered disciples of Jesus Christ	4.44 (0.71)	4.13 (1.19)	4.5 (0.53)
VCQ3 - The organizational structure of the church should be to build up the body of Christ (internal) and equip the saints for ministry (external).	4.56 (0.63)	4.8 (0.41)	4.88 (0.35)
VCQ4 - The primary practices of church can be described as Worship, Formation (or Discipleship), Community, and Mission.	4.49 (0.63)	4.4 (0.83)	4.63 (0.74)
VCQ5 - The purpose of church is to carry on the reconciling work of Jesus Christ by proclaiming the Gospel and being a light to the world.	4.75 (0.46)	4.8 (0.77)	4.88 (0.35)
VCQ6 - Church has a specific calling from God to restore the marginalized populations of a community.	4.31 (0.76)	4.87 (0.35)	4.5 (0.76)
FAQ1 - Served at/with/through a local non-profit or parachurch ministry in my community.	3.13 (1.19)	4.27 (0.80)	4.38 (0.74)
FAQ2 - Served with/through my local church out in the community.	3.02 (1.13)	3.33 (1.11)	4.38 (0.74)
FAQ3 - Built genuine relationships with people not self-identifying as Christians.	3.64 (1.00)	3.8 (1.21)	4.00 (1.20)
FAQ4 - Been present at city or community events with the awareness and intentionality of living out my faith and serving as a witness to Jesus Christ.	2.96 (1.18)	3.8 (0.94)	2.75 (1.04)
FAQ5 - Prayed for the common good of my city and for the Kingdom of God to reign in it as in Heaven.	3.58 (1.01)	4.0 (1.20)	4.13 (0.83)

FAQ6 - Have served or been present with a marginalized population (e.g. homeless, impoverished, felons, etc.) in my community.	2.90 (1.16)	4.27 (1.03)	3.5 (0.76)
FAQ7 - Have spent time in an under-resourced neighborhood in my community with the purpose of living out my faith.	2.37 (1.10)	4.53 (0.74)	3.63 (0.52)



The mean responses of the Belief Statement section ranged from 4.71-4.92 for the congregants, 4.67-4.8 for the neighborhood revitalization participants, and 4.88-5 for the pastors, showing very little deviation regarding the importance of these Belief Statements to their everyday lives. The mean responses to the frequency of the various Faith and

Action questions (Figure 4.6) reflected a higher variance, ranging from 2.37-3.58 for the congregants, 3.33-4.53 for the neighborhood revitalization participants, and 2.75-4.38 for the pastors.

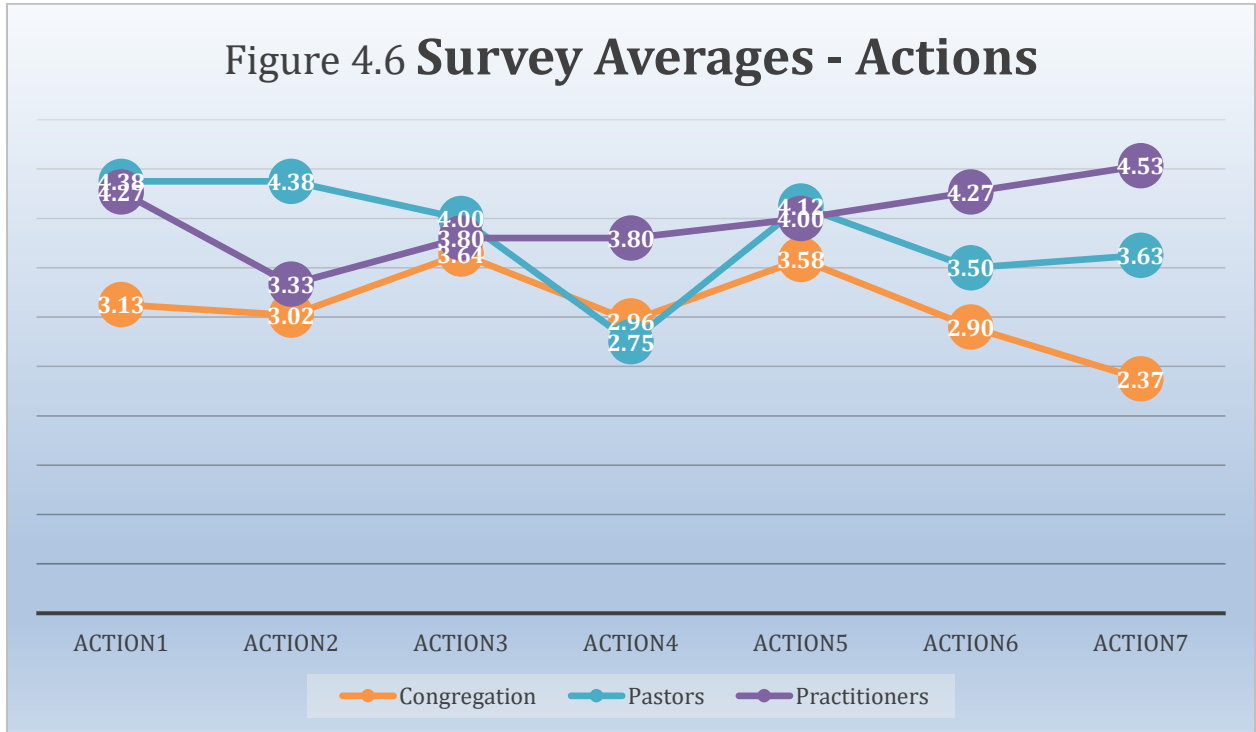


Table 4.3 - *Statistical Difference in Means for Action Statements*

	Congregation	Pastors	Practitioners	Congregation and Pastors (p-value)	Congregation and Practitioners (p-value)	Pastors and Practitioners (p- value)
Action1	3.13	4.38	4.27	0.01***	0.01***	0.75
Action2	3.02	4.38	3.33	0.01***	0.31	0.02**
Action3	3.64	4.00	3.80	0.42	0.62	0.71
Action4	2.96	2.75	3.80	0.59	0.01***	0.03**
Action5	3.58	4.13	4.00	0.11	0.20	0.77

Action6	2.90	3.50	4.27	0.06*	0.01***	0.06*
Action7	2.37	3.63	4.53	0.01***	0.01***	0.01***

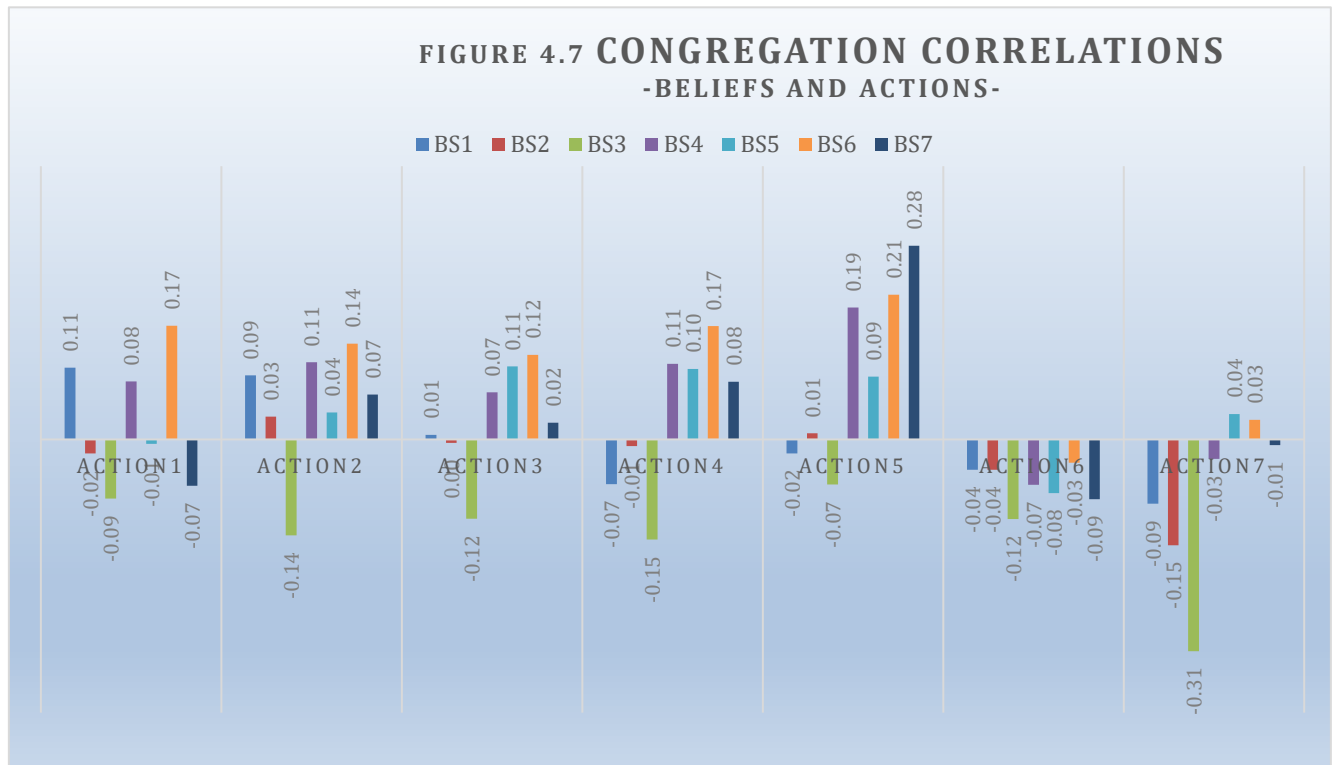
The Faith and Action section of the Congregational Survey shows a high level of confidence in the statistical difference in means for questions six and seven across the three samples of congregants, pastors, and practitioners (Table 4.3). FAQ 6 states “Have served or been present with a marginalized population (e.g. homeless, impoverished, felons, etc.) in my community.” Results show a 94 percent (p-value = 0.06) confidence between congregation members and pastors as well as between pastors and practitioners. A 99 percent confidence (p-value = 0.01) occurs between congregants and neighborhood revitalization practitioners. FAQ 7 states “Have spent time in an under-resourced neighborhood in my community with the purpose of living out my faith.” Results here showed a consistent statistical difference between all samples producing a confident rate of 99 percent (p-value = 0.01) across all sample groups. The data establishes with high confidence that congregants, pastors, and practitioners apply their Faith in Action in fundamentally different ways when participating in ministry to marginalized populations and under-resourced neighborhoods.

In order to discover which Belief Statements presented in the survey were potential motivating and sustaining factors for engagement in neighborhood revitalization, a conditional breakdown of respondents who indicated ‘Often’ for FAQ 6 and FAQ 7 was sorted by highest score on mean response for Belief Statements:

- BSQ4 ( $M = 4.86$ ): I believe the second person of the Trinity (the Son) assumed human form in the person of Jesus Christ, lived life among humanity, and is completely both God and man.
- BSQ6 ( $M = 4.86$ ): I believe Jesus Christ was crucified for the rebellion of creation against God, for the purpose of reconciling all things to God.
- BSQ7 ( $M = 4.86$ ): I believe that Jesus Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father and reigns over the Kingdom of Heaven that is being established by God.

The three Belief Statements above had the highest mean response among respondents indicating ‘Often’ in regard to ministry of marginalized populations and under-resourced neighbors. This finding provides supporting evidence for the qualitative data presented—that the Incarnation was a key Biblical theme and understanding for disciples of Jesus participating in neighborhood revitalization work. This belief is further supported by the Factor Analysis which will be presented in research question two below, showing that BSQ 4 to 7 are interpreted as a worldview incorporating the mission of Jesus as separate from the mission of God.

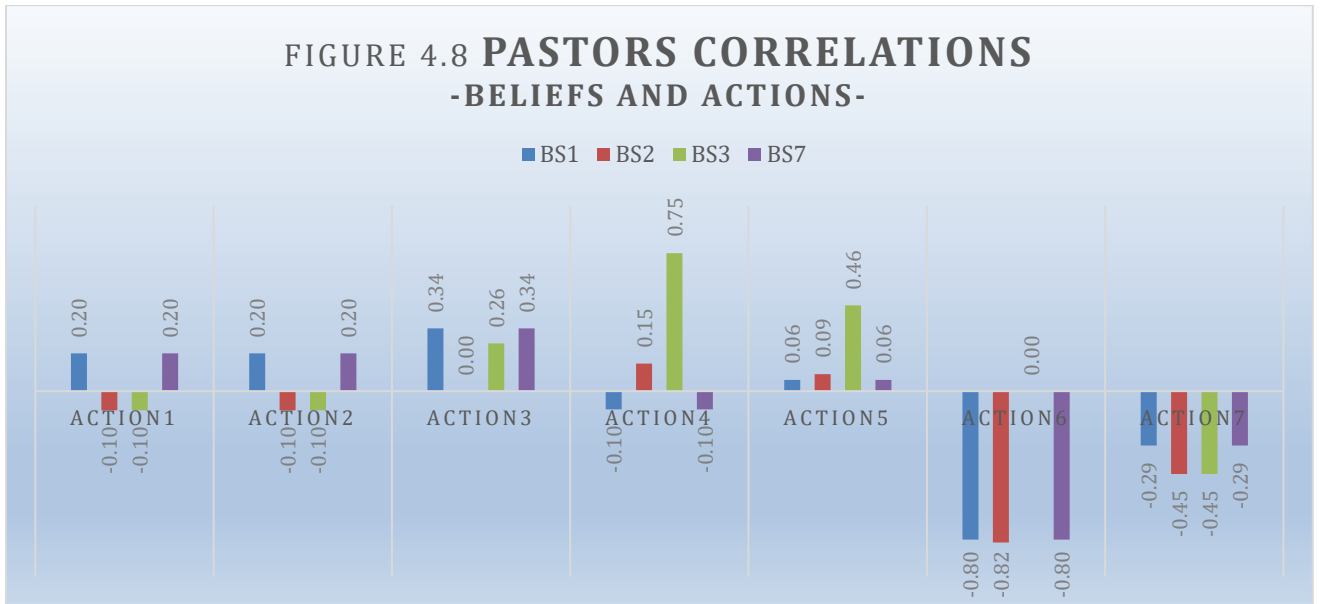
In response to research question 1, the final analysis from the Congregational Survey demonstrates the correlation between the Belief Statements and Faith and Action sections for congregants (Figure 4.7), pastors (Figure 4.8) and practitioners (Figure 4.9). Congregants and pastors maintained similarities across all Belief Statements and frequency of Faith in Action. FAQ 1 through 5 produced a generally positive correlation between beliefs and actions. The exception being BSQ 3 for congregants, “I believe that God’s Mission derives from His very nature—the Father sends the Son, the Father and Son send the Spirit, the Father, Son, Spirit send the church into the world,” which showed a negative correlation across all the Faith and Action questions. FAQ 6 and 7—the two Faith and Action questions specifically addressing ministry to marginalized populations



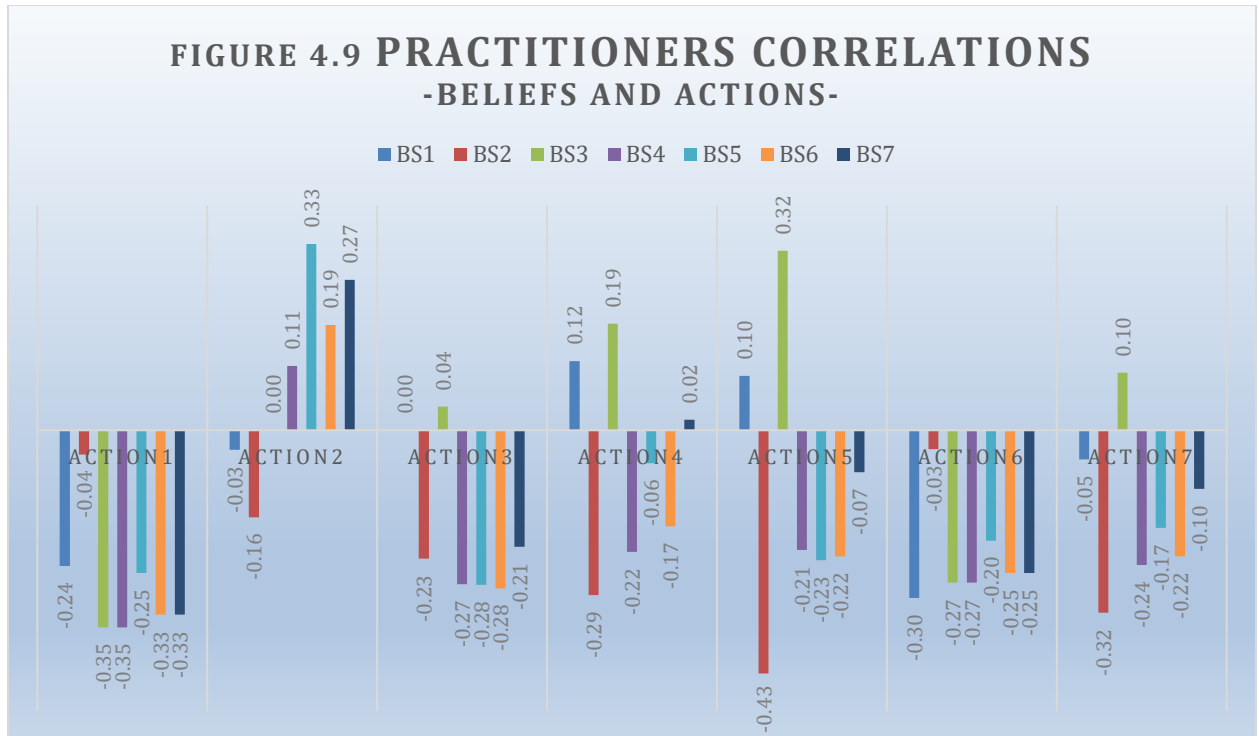
and under-resourced neighborhoods—shows a negative correlation as well, providing evidence that the more you affirm the importance of the presented Belief Statements in



your everyday life, the less the congregants engage in those particular expressions of Faith in Action. This holds true for the pastors surveyed as well.



A negative correlation was presented nearly across the board for those actively participating in neighborhood revitalization work with two notable exceptions. The first exception was in response to FAQ 2, which states “Served with/through my local church out in the community.” This response will be discussed more fully in presentation of evidence for research question 3. For practitioners, BS 3, addressing the sending nature of God, presents a positive correlation in four of the FA questions. Included is question seven dealing directly with being present in under-resourced neighborhoods. A negative correlation is found regarding FA 6 which deals directly with marginalized populations.



### Research Question #2: Description of Evidence

**Where do people engage and sustain their neighborhood engagement among the marginalized of a community in their discipleship process?**

The second research question was designed to determine where the people of God engage and sustain their neighborhood engagement among marginalized populations in the discipleship process. The qualitative data pertaining to neighborhood revitalization participants that was gained from interview questions 1 through 4 will serve as the main presentation of evidence addressing this research question. Supportive data from a factor analysis of the Congregational Survey will be presented at the end of the chapter and will be reflected upon in chapter five.

Three themes emerged from the analysis of the interview data surrounding initial engagement and sustaining engagement in neighborhood revitalization. For initial

engagement, the themes were a personal invitation, a practical step of faith, and the opportunity to participate in wholistic ministry. For sustaining engagement, the themes were seeing movement, getting to know neighbors, and being part of a community. Table 4.4 provides the total number of interviewees who mentioned the themes and factors.

**Table 4.4 - *Qualitative Data Interview Themes for Factors that Motivate and Sustain***

Initial		Sustain	
Theme	# of Interviewees	Theme	# of Interviewees
Invitation	11/15	Seeing Movement	12/15
Step of Faith	13/15	Getting to Know Neighbors	15/15
Participation in Wholistic Ministry	14/15	Serving in Community	10/15

### **Initial Engagement**

**Invitation.** In response to interview question one (IQ 1), eleven of the fifteen interviewees mentioned either a personal invitation to participate, watching a respected mentor participate in neighborhood work and following them into it, or an offering of their local church as catalysts in their own life. These will be grouped together as ‘invitation’.

- \*\*\*\* took me to Glenwood and showed me the quality of life of the neighborhood. We walked the streets, talked to neighbors, saw the conditions of the people living there. It really opened my eyes, and was my first step into the neighborhood.

- I took a tour of the neighborhood, seeing it through the eyes of people working in the neighborhood.
- We started taking suburban people on van tours to gain exposure to marginalized populations, letting them see them for themselves. We started seeing people participate in the work after that. It was a trickle, not a flood, but without that first step I don't think they ever would have engaged.
- Somebody in our congregation wanted to pass out backpacks at one of the poorest apartment complexes in our area. I joined them. We would serve a meal and get to know folks. That was the beginning of my involvement in neighborhood work.

**Step of Faith.** When asked for initial inspirations and motivations, interviewees said they wanted to get involved in place-based (neighborhood) community development work. Thirteen of the fifteen responded with a story of entering into the neighborhood and having a tangible experience in a disinvested community. Among some of the experiences mentioned were such activities as block parties, door knocking for SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, serving through neighborhood schools, neighborhood clean-up days, and neighborhood tours. These experiences were tied to steps of faith. One participant observed, "I considered it as a step of faith, moving forward as a way to be a learner of Jesus. I took a tour of the neighborhood and saw it through the eyes of the people there, it became a way around the noise of 'you shouldn't go there' and became a place I needed to step into, going, being seen by neighbors." Journeying into marginalized communities, seeing the situation for themselves, and meeting neighbors were persistent catalysts for engagement, as seen in the following statements:

- I needed to take a step of faith. I just took off walking on every Saturday and Sunday and meeting people, inviting them to the meeting, making connections to people.
- This (neighborhood revitalization) is what you want me to do now, so now I'm going to go and do it.
- The next step of faith for me was moving into the neighborhood. We moved in to learn, live, and love.

**Participating in Wholistic Ministry.** The opportunity to participate in ministry that ministers to the whole of a person as well as the community was a frequent response to IQ 1 and IQ 4. All but one of the interviewees mentioned wholistic ministry. Participating in neighborhood revitalization is an outlet for what they consider to be a response to disciple-making. Several quotes from the qualitative data are presented here to show the comprehensive nature of the responses:

- We were looking for a new way to serve, something wholistic, in a focused way for Kingdom impact. We decided to be strategic in the neighborhood.
- Physical life matters. Gospel is wholistic – whole people, whole communities, whole city. I saw that community development was a way to bring this to marginalized people in our city.
- Wholistic restoration of things, which we know is going to come, but wish we could experience that now, and we can!
- How we can intervene today so that our neighbors get wholistic help in life to succeed? This is what I understand to be ministry of reconciliation.

- I've come to believe that as disciples of Jesus we need to build wholistic place, help bring systemic change. We are getting to partner wholistically with parents to help the kids win, succeed.
- I came to the point where if we want to see real change, have to work with the whole of the family and community.
- The most important thing God has used the neighborhood work to form me is understanding that ministry is creating healthy sustainability. Where economically, educationally, physically, and health wise, ministry is sustaining everyone, and everyone is able to participate.

### **Sustaining Engagement**

**Seeing Movement.** When asked what has sustained their engagement in the neighborhood (IQ 3), twenty-five different comments emerged from the fifteen interviews that mentioned specifically seeing or knowing that positive change has occurred. Especially significant among the comments was attributing the movement to God:

- Making progress has sustained me. I've seen God move vividly. Mostly seems like I'm just following God around. It is easy to see value and investment when tied to these actions. They become fulfilling and empowering.
- Seeing progress has sustained me, even if it takes a long time. Don't underestimate or overestimate experiencing change. Blessing is in the journey. It has been a lot of fun seeing movement. Movement in Housing. Movement in Commercial. Movement of Spirituality.

- We have seen pieces of it come together along the way, and that is fueling. A million little ways God has victories all around us.
- We have seen a lot of momentum build over the years. Some really big wins have provided opportunities, hope, and keep us going. And seeing changes. We are already seeing changes in the neighborhood and the family and the kids.

**Getting to Know Neighbors.** In response to sustaining engagement in neighborhood revitalization work, mentioned among the most comments was the concept of building relationships with the people of marginalized populations. A total of sixty-one comments were given during the interviews that either stated relationships with neighbors as a direct cause or mentioned a neighbor they have developed a relationship with by name. The theme of building relationships kept pace throughout all interview comments but was most prevalent in response to the question of when they felt most alive, motivated, or excited about their engagement. One interviewee has been in vocational ministry for thirty-five years but had only begun participating in neighborhood revitalization in the last eight. He said he had reached the point in his ministry where he, “couldn’t tell you a name of a person we had helped. We would say we served the city, but we weren’t connected to the people. We ran programs really.” Through neighborhood revitalization, however, he began to reconnect with people, build relationships with marginalized neighbors, and know their names and stories. He went on to say:

I realized the difference one day when we wanted to get some input from a family we had gotten to know well through the listening sessions and neighborhood work. We brought a pizza for lunch, sitting in their living room, it

became a place of not only ministry, but mutual sharing. The depth of the mother's knowledge {of the neighborhood} was profound.

This type of story was not isolated to one interviewee. A marker of these stories was their concreteness—days, times, places, names—and always accompanied by real experience. When these concrete stories of real people known by the participants were being communicated, the speaker's body language and voice inflection became more animated and a physical leaning in and more prominent eye contact and smiling was present. The number of comments directly claiming this reason for engagement coupled with observable supporting data places the building of genuine relationships with people in disinvested neighborhoods or marginalized populations as a catalytic motivator and sustaining factor in mobilization into neighborhood revitalization in discipleship. This occurrence is further evidenced by the following concise responses in regard to what has sustained their neighborhood engagement:

- Making connections with neighbors.
- Anchoring myself into a space and a people.
- Being planted and rooted in the community. Relationships.
- Fell in love with them (neighbors).
- Knowing the zone kids, and building relationships with them. We are now building relationships with parents.
- Building relationships one on one with them (neighbors). Really getting to know them.
- The relationships that have been built. They aren't projects, but relationships I have built over time.



- We had relationships. That was how we knew we were winning.

**Serving in Community.** The final observation uncovered by the analysis of the research connected to sustaining engagement was the opportunity to participate in neighborhood revitalization efforts alongside and in community with others, especially (but not limited to) other Christians. The participants referenced two distinct forms of community: (1) some sort of formal affiliation that meets regularly together examples of which included an intentional urban missional community, a small group, and a local church outreach team active in a neighborhood, (2) a decentralized awareness and working alongside other disciples of Jesus in collective impact for neighborhood revitalization.

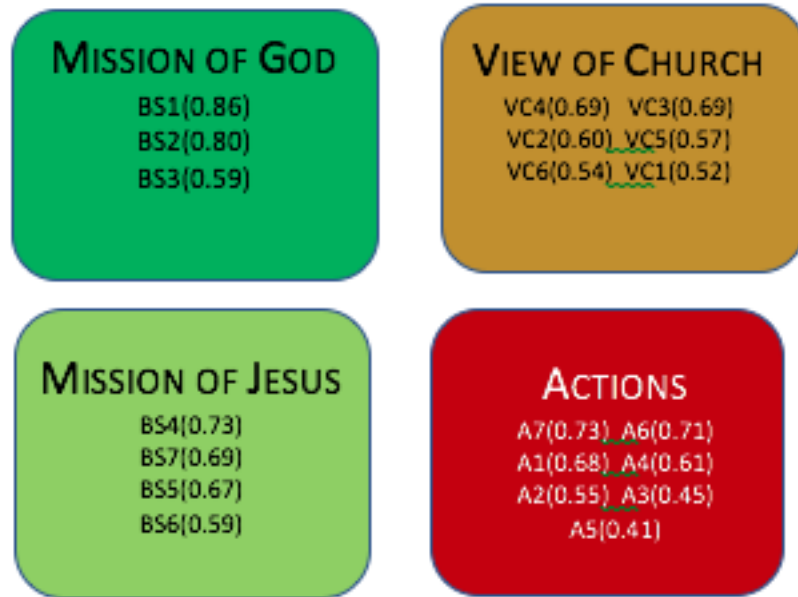
- What has sustained my engagement? The people I have gotten to know through it. Being around like-minded individuals, Christ-first mentality, don't know how I fit into leadership, but finding those same people who have the heart for seeing people reach their full potential.
- The People of Praise (missional community). We don't want to leave them. To be a part of that community, so committed to the neighborhood, they have sustained us.
- Absolutely the people I have met, the other people in communities where we are doing neighborhood work, meeting people already doing the work. You find those people that are servant leaders and it is a joy to do the work with them.
- Serving alongside brothers and sisters in Christ that can grow you and education you, be learners of Jesus together for the neighborhood.

## Congregational Survey

The Congregational Survey did not directly address research question number 2 as the tool was not designed to ask congregants where they engaged and sustained neighborhood engagement or ministry among the marginalized of a community in their discipleship process. However, running a factor analysis led to one observation that provides evidence for a contributing factor as to why those participating in neighborhood revitalization engage in the work. A factor analysis analyzes how the participants viewed the survey, grouping larger concepts that go together and identifying latent variables underlying how the respondents interpreted the questions. In this way, a factor analysis reveals the make-up of the worldview of the respondents. Running the factor analysis helps to show an underlying factor between congregants whose collective response to FAQ 6 ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ) and FAQ 7 ( $M = 2.37$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) was significantly lower than the practitioners' response to FAQ 6 ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ) and FAQ 7 ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ).

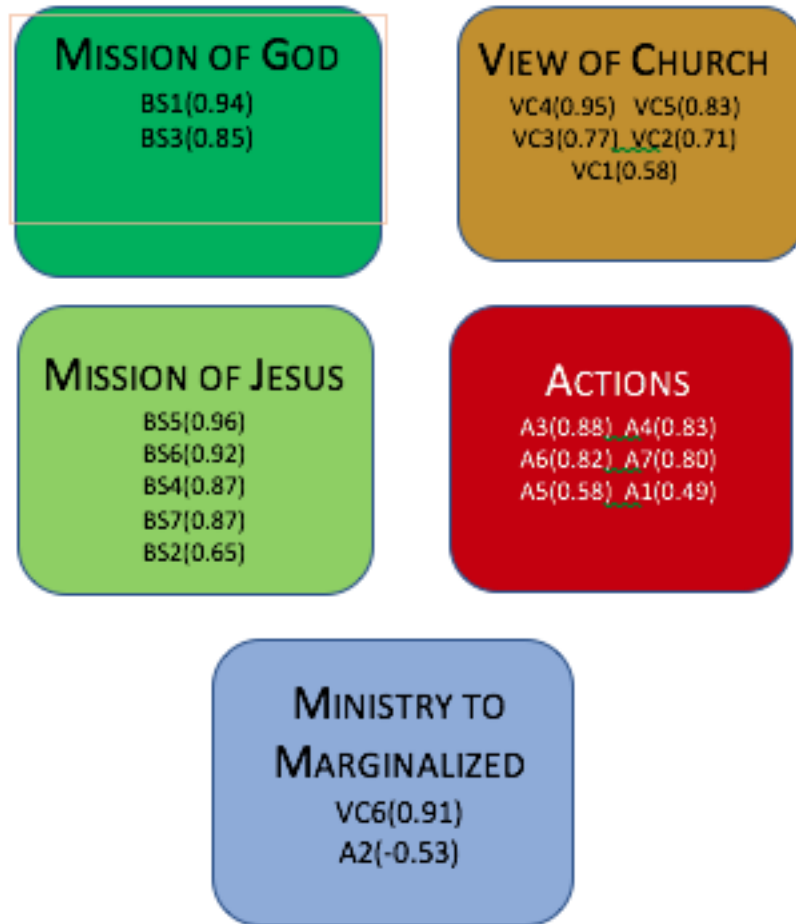
Regarding the Belief Statements, the congregants placed the first three survey questions and the final four survey questions into two different groups. The first three Belief Statements reflect the missionary nature of God (Creation, Relational, Sending) and the final four questions reflect the missionary actions of Jesus (Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension).

**Figure 4.10 - Factor Analysis for Congregation**



The practitioners employed the same factor grouping with the exception of attributing Creation to the missionary actions of Jesus. Similarly, the View of the Church and Faith in Action factors were basically aligned between the two. What differentiated the congregants from the practitioners was an additional factor connected to VCQ 6, “Church has a specific calling from God to restore the marginalized populations of a community.” Compare Figure 4.10 and Figure 4.11.

**Figure 4.11 - Factor Analysis for Practitioners**



This difference further supports the qualitative data presented as evidence in research question number 1, that a sense of calling is a Biblical theme and understanding that motivates and sustains neighborhood engagement. The factor analysis also provides evidence that what motivates and sustains engagement to marginalized populations is an underlying worldview that includes ministry to the marginalized.

### **Research Question #3: Description of Evidence**

**What are potential gaps or reasons for non-engagement for church engagement in neighborhood revitalization?**

The final research question addressed the gap that exists between church engagement and participation in neighborhood revitalization. Stated more pointedly, by posing the question of why churches are not engaging in neighborhood revitalization, the focus group of pastors will be heavily drawn upon because of their unique position of being church leaders leading congregations on the same side of town where a recognized disinvested neighborhood exists, and no formal neighborhood revitalization effort is currently underway. Themes that emerged from all six questions of the focus group will provide data for evidence addressing the research question. Question 5 from the interviews with neighborhood revitalization practitioners will also be used as evidence, as this question is the same as Question 6 from the focus group. In addition, evidence from the Congregational Survey will also be heavily utilized, presenting the mean average of the View of the Church section as well as correlations between sections of the survey and individual questions and a descriptive analysis of covariance using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

### **Dichotomy of Spiritual and Physical Ministry**

Beginning with the qualitative data from the focus group, it must first be noted that the participants had difficulty keeping the discussion concentrated on neighborhood, place-based ministry during the duration of the focus group. While the lack of focus may more accurately reflect a major finding as opposed to a data-point, the researcher feels it must be mentioned in the analysis of the research pointing to a gap in the of engagement of local churches in neighborhood revitalization. The opening question of the focus group time was, “If you had to classify an area on the Westside of Evansville as an under-resourced neighborhood, what would it be?” The discussion immediately turned to a

deliberation on poverty. This observation is important because although generational poverty may be implied, poverty was not directly addressed in the question. The first twenty minutes of the focus group went the same direction. The first comment from a pastor that named a neighborhood—the Howell Park neighborhood—came well into the discussion. As soon as it was mentioned, all eight participants did agree that this area was the under-resourced neighborhood on the Westside.

This consensus led to the observation that focus group participants, all pastors, drew a distinction between spiritual poverty and other types of poverty. Thus, they placed the priority on the spiritual poverty of their marginalized neighbors:

- There is a disconnection between the wholistic action of our lives. We think it is economically, we know it is spiritually, if you can't see the difference between the two, you will never be able to change the issue.
- The contributing factors are that they are spiritually impoverished, their spiritual resources are shallow.
- I agree that the biggest contributing factor is spiritual poverty over anything else.

Mid-way through the group discussion, half the participants began to question the very idea of under-resourced neighborhoods and generational poverty:

- I struggle with “under-resourced”. Evansville is very resourced.
- Don't know that there is any area that is under-resourced. The amount of resources available is amazing.
- They are resourced, but they just don't know it. Real poverty is from the Spiritual side, ignorant of grace, love, forgiveness of Jesus.

### **Negative Perception of Under-Resourced Neighbors**

The discussion was turned to the Howell Park neighborhood and agreement was made among all participants that the Howell Park neighborhood was the geographically bounded neighborhood on the Westside of Evansville being traditionally understood to be under-resourced. Question 3 drew out a plethora of “us-them” comments. These comments reflect an overall negative perception of impoverished neighbors that provided the evidence for a lack of engagement in neighborhood revitalization. The following quotes were representative of typical comments of the focus group regarding their congregations and surrounding community especially when referring to the under-resourced neighborhood in their midst:

- There are heavy stereotypes within Westside about Howell. Coming mostly from West Terrace families. The perception is that people in Howell are blue collar, work hard, should have money and don’t need help. It is only because they have made bad choices that they are in that circumstance, so that is their fault and none of my business.
- There is level of darkness and evil in the neighborhood and a perception that people have no business going there. Cycle of poverty, generational poverty is mentioned. There’s even a perception that the people amongst community, living in Howell do not see themselves as a worthy investment.
- There is definitely a dynamic of well-off people versus those in poverty, they don’t want to connect to one another. Home owners look down on people that rent. This divides the Westside. Neighborhood not caring for another.

There were a few negative perceptions voiced by the pastors themselves:

- I say this in the real meaning of the term ‘ignorant’, but in describing the people that live there, they are ignorant. Ignorant to how to change, what to change in their lives. They like to work the system. The ignorance contributes to it. It is all they know. They can work the system just to survive.
- The nicest place in Howell is a liquor store. There is a lot of addiction, broken families, and violence in the neighborhood.

Only one of the eight pastors claimed their church had a repeated presence in the neighborhood (through a church-school partnership), and two of the eight pastors shared a story of recently being present in the neighborhood with the intention of living out or sharing their faith. All group members live on the same side of town and lead churches whose physical buildings are within a three-mile radius of the neighborhood.

### **Barriers to Mobilization**

The following data will specifically highlight question 5 from the Focus Group resource: “What barriers do you face in leadership and/or organizationally, in mobilizing your congregation into neighborhood engagement?” Out of this, two themes emerged: (1) Institutional or organizational restrictions, (2) margin in the lives of their congregants.

**Institutional or Organizational Restrictions.** In one particularly transparent moment, one pastor stated that he wanted to burn the church building down. He expressed that the building itself was a barrier to mobilization. Received with laughter from the rest of the focus group, the conversation then turned toward the perceived restrictions all the leaders faced due to institutional or organizational systems and structures, both of which are tied to the local churches they oversee in a vocational capacity. Some of the listed barriers to mobilization were:



- The need to sustain internal programs and ministries, e.g. Sunday services, Sunday school or small groups, Youth Ministry
- Sustaining existing external programs of outreach added over the years, e.g. food pantries, clothing banks, annual service events
- The expectation of the role of clergy, especially congregants seeing ministry as something done by paid professionals
- The maintenance and oversight of the physical church building
- Leadership structures that set expectations to care for the many instead of investing deeply in a few
- Ministry being tied to their vocation, their living wages are connected to existing systems and structures

Another pastor who had served at his local church for over twenty years before becoming a bi-vocational pastor and now serves as the full-time pastor in retirement (mentioned here because of the context of not being reliant on a living wage from his church) captured the sentiment of the group when he stated, “I’d like to hit reset, hash out all the systems and processes that bottle-neck real ministry and prohibits people from mobilization. There is such a dependency on the programming of the church instead of the personal call to ministry.” This comment was followed by several transparent comments from the pastors regarding their own leadership in pastoral role as barriers to mobilization of their congregations:

- What would I do if money not an issue? Ministry would look different for me!  
Not bound by job description but could just do ministry, it would be different.

- My leadership barrier is personal, I want entire church body to be mobilized, Jesus mobilized a few. Struggle of the multitude versus the few I am called to. I'm always placating the multitudes.
- Comparison. Look at this church this ministry, they have money, resources, people, screw it, all keep doing what I'm doing. Don't want to be a failure in a human mind, can't compete. Don't want to fail. People might not do it again. IF it doesn't make an impact it will look, bad on me and/or the church, so I don't do it.

**Margins in the Lives of Congregants.** The second unifying response to barriers of action was in the perceived lack of margin in the lives of the groups' congregants. Church activity, including any sort of attempt at directed mobilization of the local church, was seen as having to compete with other societal demands on congregants' time—work, kids' schedules, social lives, etc. Agreement was found in that there is something unique going on in this cultural moment associated with the internet, mobile phones, and social media. One of the effects mentioned was an overall lack of community, and this has extended to impact the local church. In a general sense, the effects were attributed to the overall growth of isolation, less connectedness to others, and forgetfulness of neighboring as a normative practice. These observations serve as barriers to identifying with a larger community. The pastors maintain that the state of culture is also affecting their churches. The traditional understanding of the church as a family or localized community is not something they readily experience in the leadership of their congregations. The group stated that their churches no longer see themselves as a community for the larger community which becomes a barrier to unified action. The pastors were also aware that the perceived competition between the church and the overloaded schedules of its

congregants contributes to the problem of lack of margin as a barrier to mobilization.

These statements from the Focus Group provide direct evidence for these observations:

- Those that have physical resources are so busy, they don't have the resource of time. They are not sharing, not connected to others.
- Time in general is a barrier to mobilization. All our families are busy. On top of that, the church needs them to come to this, or come to that. They are all overloaded with full schedules, sheer reality of time.
- Their (congregants) lives are revolved around their stuff they are doing, Revolve around their phones, social networks, kids' schedules. If I can get them to stop and have a cup of coffee that is a miracle.
- I believe the biggest barrier in my church is the comfortability with the status quo. Christians come to church, serve, attend, tithe—check all the boxes. Largely friends with others in the church. They don't have the capacity for discomfort.

### **The Future of the Neighborhood—Presence of the Church**

The final presentation of qualitative data from the research will include a summation of evidence from the final question from both the neighborhood revitalization interviews and the focus group of pastors. The question was, “Based on your understanding of the Mission of God, make three wishes for the future of the neighborhood.” The unifying response amongst the two groups was that in God's preferred future, churches and disciples of Jesus would be present and engaged in the neighborhood.

*NR Interviews:*

- That churches would find runways to engage in neighborhoods and be invitational in the neighborhood.
- Of all the neighborhoods, we need churches. Churches that serve the neighborhood, serve the people, disciple people wholistically and a church is driving this.
- Agents of mobilization for the church would be present in the neighborhood.
- Would want a worshipping community in the neighborhood that is of the neighborhood.
- That people in the neighborhood will feel love, and love to learn one another. Open to the possibility of systemic change, regardless of the way they think about it, especially if they do so through the love of Jesus. This is where the church can come in.
- Churches are doing pretty good job of exposing people to need, but doesn't leave people with a place to go if they want to be involved in that.

*Pastors:*

- GO, we have to go to where people who have the message are. Not attractional but go to where people are.
- Ditto (above)...add equip, empower, mobilize the people of the church, a part of that where church is aware of cultural issues, appropriate manner, hand in hand.
- At our church 50% live outside, 50% inside neighborhood. We face integrating the two groups of people into one congregation. Some success, but difficult. Well-to-do people that drive in, have opened up church to those in neighborhood and

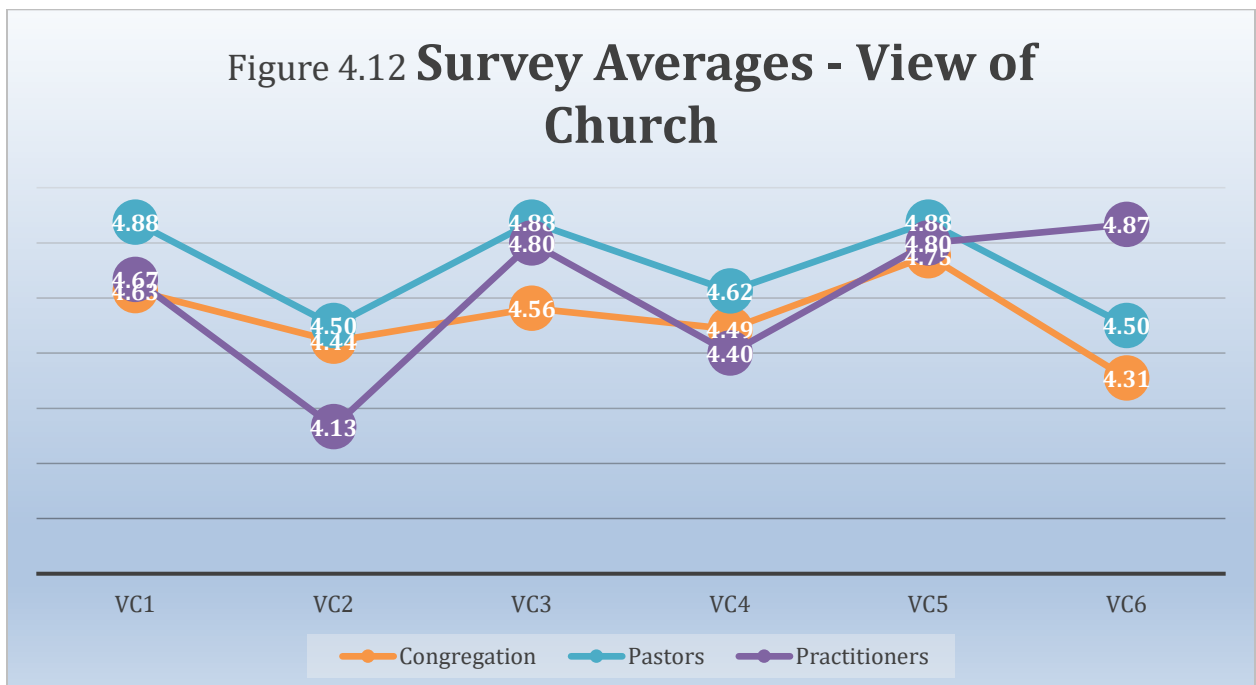
drawn them in, interesting to watch the two groups to become one, but certainly a barrier.

- Churches united under the cause around where they are, not leaving their mission around half mile of church building. This would cover the entire city.
- Injection of hope. Collaboration, think of those that live in Howell, people that are in all of our congregations, connect them to other Christians in other churches.

Bring hope to that neighborhood.

### Congregational Survey

The View of the Church section of the Congregational Survey was designed to address research question number 3—exploring potential gaps and reasons for non-engagement in neighborhood revitalization by churches. The survey averages for the view of the church church section for all three sample groups is presented in Figure 4.12. The full descriptive statistics, including the mean responses and standard deviations for this section, are presented in Table 4.2.

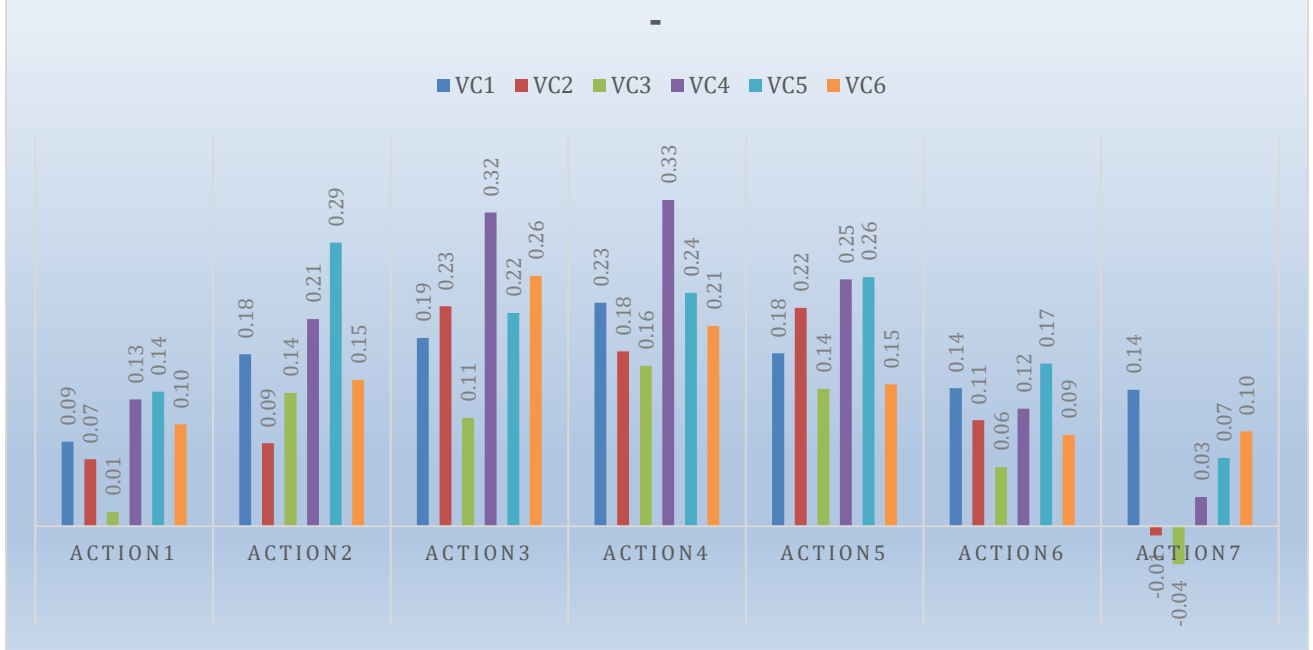


The pattern of responses from the sample groups of congregants, pastors, and practitioners mirrored each other in all Views of the Church except VCQ 6: “The church has a specific calling from God to restore the marginalized populations of a community”. Here the practitioners deviated significantly in their View of the Church compared to congregants and pastors. VCQ 6 had the lowest mean response in the sections for both congregants and pastors.

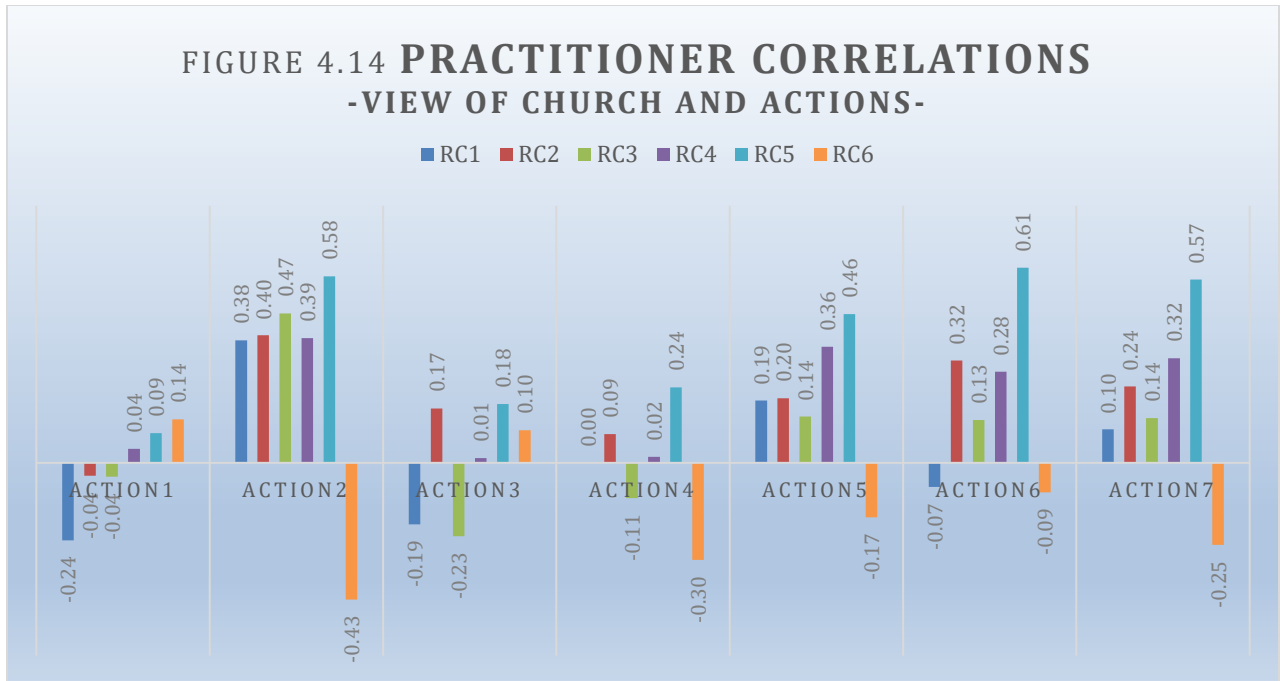
The other statistically significant observations from the View of the Church section is in the practitioners response to VCQ 2: “Church is the assembled or gathered disciples of Jesus Christ,” and the congregants response to VCQ 3: “The organizational structure of the church should be to build up the body of Christ (internal) and equip the saints for ministry (external).” While the pattern of response did hold, the responses themselves showed marked deviation from the other two sample groups.

**Correlations.** The final presentation of data from the Congregational Survey will be the correlation between the respondents’ View of the Church and their responses to Faith in Action.

FIGURE 4.13 **CONGREGATION CORRELATIONS**  
-VIEW OF CHURCH AND ACTIONS-



The Congregants' View of the Church and the frequency of their Faith in Action responses in the survey show a nearly universal positive correlation (Figure 4.13). The higher the View of the Church, the more frequently the congregants engaged in the various Faith in Action items listed in the survey. This holds true for FAQ 6 and FAQ 7, the two questions dealing directly with ministry to marginalized populations and engaging in under-resourced neighborhoods. The only exception being in FAQ 7, which shows a slight negative correlation to VCQ 3: "The organizational structure of the church should be to build up the body of Christ (internal) and equip the saints for ministry (external)."



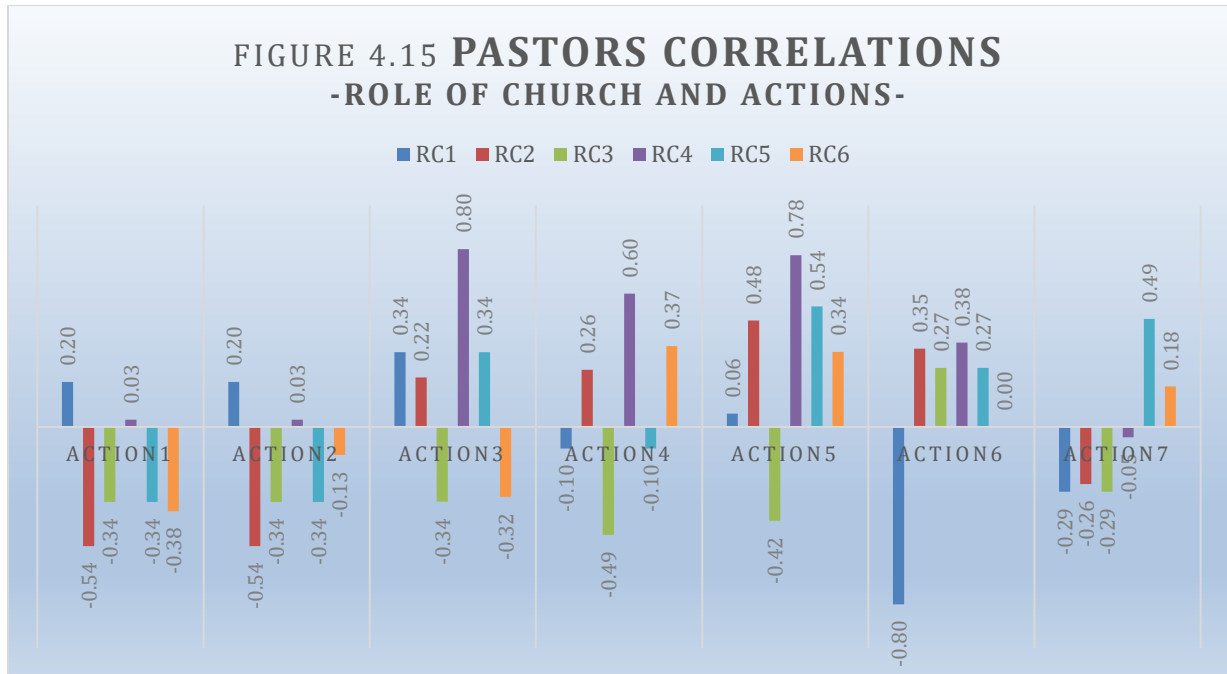
Overall, the practitioners show a similar positive correlation between their View of the Church and Faith in Action as the congregants (Figure 4.14). One notable exception is the negative correlation between VCQ 6: “The church has a specific calling from God to restore the marginalized populations of a community,” and the Faith in Action section, especially applied to FAQ 6 and FAQ 7. The reason as to why the disciples of Jesus actively participating in neighborhood revitalization would show a negative correlation to a View of the Church that specifically references a call from God to restore marginalized populations is an unanticipated data point. A comparison of the mean responses from the survey will help to fill in the story regarding this seemingly counter-intuitive data point.

For practitioners, VCQ 6 had the highest mean response in the View of the Church section ( $M = 4.87$ ,  $SD = 0.35$ ). This response was not only the highest mean response on the entire survey but also the lowest scored question per standard deviation, showing the lowest variance among respondents and demonstrating unity among the



practitioners on the role of the church in ministering to the marginalized. Their responses to FAQ 6 ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ) and FAQ 7 ( $M = 4.53$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ) held the highest mean response rate in the Faith and Action section. For congregants, VCQ 6 had a lower mean response ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ), and the same for pastors ( $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ). When taking into consideration the mean response of congregants to FAQ 6 ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ) and FAQ 7 ( $M = 2.37$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) and the mean response of pastors to FAQ 6 ( $M = 3.5$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ) and FAQ 7 ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 0.52$ ), a fuller picture begins to emerge. The practitioners' high view of the call of the church to marginalized populations leads them to more engagement in neighborhood revitalization and ministry to marginalized populations. This finding is further supported by the factor analysis presented in research question number 3, showing that the neighborhood revitalization participants had an underlying factor that congregants did not have. These observations reflect a worldview that includes ministering to the marginalized.

As a group, the pastors show more variance in positive and negative correlation between their View of the Church and frequency of Faith in Action (Figure 4.15). Overall FAQ 1, FAQ 2 and FAQ 7 show a negative correlation and FAQ 3 though 6 show a positive correlation.



Specifically addressing research question number 3, potential gaps and reasons for non-engagement by churches in neighborhood revitalization and the negative correlation to FAQ 2—“Served with/through my local church out in the community”—provide supportive evidence to the qualitative data presented above that the pastors see organizational or institutional restrictions as barriers to mobilization. The negative correlation to FAQ 1—“Served at/with/through a local non-profit or parachurch ministry in my community”—supports the qualitative data presented above that pastors perceive margins in the lives of congregants to be a barrier to mobilization. While the overall correlation between FAQ 7 and the View of the Church is negative, VCQ 5—“The purpose of church is to carry on the reconciling work of Jesus Christ by proclaiming the Gospel and being a light to the world”—and VCQ 6—“The church has a specific calling from God to restore the marginalized populations of a community”—show a positive correlation. The pastors do see a connection between the View of the Church and the

reconciling work of the people of God as well as the call to minister to marginalized populations.

A conditional breakdown of survey responses to VCQ 6 provides further evidence for the overall survey findings that the higher the View of the Church, the more frequently congregants are mobilized into ministry to the marginalized and under-resourced neighborhoods. Sorting the responses by Strongly Agree, Agree, and Neutral, the mean response decreased with the respondents' agreement with the View of the Church.

Strongly Agree: FAQ6 ( $M = 2.99$ ), FAQ7 ( $M = 2.47$ )

Agree: FAQ6 ( $M = 2.84$ ), FAQ7 ( $M = 2.27$ )

Neutral: FAQ6 ( $M = 2.55$ ), FAQ7 ( $M = 2.15$ )

### **Summary of Major Findings**

This section will conclude the presentation of data through a summary of major findings uncovered through research. The major findings are as follows:

1. Disconnect Between Belief Statements and Faith in Action
2. Opportunity to Leverage Church for Missional Engagement in Neighborhoods
3. Rediscovering the Church's Calling to Minister to Marginalized Neighbors
4. Neighborhood Engagement is formative in the Discipleship Process

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter presents the learning report for the research project. First, an analysis and synthesis of each of the major findings from the presentation of the research in the previous chapter will be done with support and reference to the literature review, additional Biblical/Theological support, and personal observation. Next the ministry implications will be articulated, including potential impact of the study, ways the study can be utilized, and a discussion of how it will inform the practice of ministry. Unexpected observations from the research will also be shared. Finally, recommendations will be offered based on the synthesis and analysis of the major findings and the ministry implications for what changes can occur in the practice of ministry and future areas of research that can build on this study as well as suggestions for who may benefit from solutions presented around the ministry problem. The purpose of this study is to discover motivating factors that will lead to sustainable engagement by the people of God in ministering to marginalized neighbors in under-resourced neighborhoods. This study was designed to specifically address the ministry context of the Evansville metropolitan region but is easily transferrable to ministries in any urban context and could be applicable to any local church hoping to engage marginalized populations living among their community.

## **Major Findings**

### **Disconnect Between Belief Statements and Faith in Action**

The most important major finding from the research was the clear disconnect between affirmation of belief statements and frequency of faith in action. Congregants reported extremely high responses to the importance of core doctrinal Belief Statements in their everyday lives (aggregated  $M = 4.84$ ) with little deviation. This indicates that cognitive assent to the foundations of the Christian faith is still very high. However, the reported frequency of the Faith in Action section showed a significantly lower response (aggregated  $M = 3.08$ ) with high deviation. Table 4.4 gave a powerful visual representation of this trend. As the survey moved from Belief Statements to View of the Church to Faith in Action, the line continued down with much greater variation. When thinking through mobilization strategies for churches or pathways of community engagement for disciples of Jesus, the research indicates that right thinking does not necessarily produce an active response in congregants to put their faith in action. This finding aligned with my personal experience over that past ten years in leading ministries and trying to mobilize churches and disciples. The amount of people identifying as Christians in our community does not correlate with the amount of people engaged in missional activities. There is a disconnect or gap between assent to doctrinal Belief Statements of the Christian faith and the People of God joining with God in His mission in the world.

**Relationship Between Right Thinking and Right Action.** This finding is further supported by a Barna Study commissioned by the Welborn Baptist Foundation for

Evansville. The report found that 83 percent of the population self-identified as Christians, 54 percent were practicing Christians, and 25 percent were highly engaged in their Christian faith. There is a general disconnect between what Christians say about their faith and what they do in response to their faith. The idea of disciples of Jesus incorporating practices leading to transformation has been adopted by missional literature to address the discipleship deficit in our churches, calling for a reorientation of disciple-making to focus on acting our way into new ways of thinking (Hirsch and Hirsch loc 872; Scandrette loc 992; Van Gelder and Zscheile loc 6283). The Western church largely operates under the pretense that right thinking leads to right doing, being a linear process. This mode of operation is influenced by the Enlightenment and is increasingly being shown as an ineffective or incomplete way of learning. Certainly, this seems to be the case in the context of discipleship and appropriation of the Christian faith into the everyday lives of disciples. The way Jesus went about making disciples as attested in the Gospels did not separate right thinking and right doing. Sometimes Jesus would lead with right thinking and other times right doing, but they were brought together in a symbiotic relationship that produces genuine learning.

The general observation of the disconnect between Belief Statements and Faith in Action was even more stark when applied to the specific participation of congregants in ministry to marginalized neighbors and presence in under-resourced communities with the intention of living out their faith. These were the two lowest mean responses by Congregants in the Faith in Action section (FAQ 6  $M = 2.90$ ; FAQ 7  $M = 2.37$ ). While it may not be surprising that congregants showed lower participation in these more difficult expressions of Faith in Action, this finding that there was an overall negative correlation

between nearly all Belief Statements and FAQ 6 and 7 (Table 4.7) was unforeseen. The same negative correlation was found in the sample of pastors. This negative correlation becomes very interesting in the data for the sample of neighborhood revitalization practitioners. Not only did they show the same negative correlation for FAQ 6 and 7 as congregants and pastors, but they showed a negative correlation overall between the Belief Statements and Faith in Action sections. Reasons for this may include heightened humility through repeated proximity to marginalized neighbors or continued transformational work in the discipleship process by those engaging in neighborhood revitalization. However, further research is needed to validate these possibilities. What can be safely concluded from the research is that strong affirmation of Belief Statements does not necessarily lead to participation in ministry to marginalized neighbors and engagement in neighborhoods where they live.

**The Inseparability of Faith and Works.** In reflecting on this major finding, I could not help but make a connection to the infamous passage in James 2.14-26 where the author makes an argument for the inseparability of faith and works, concluding that “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.” It is worth noting that James defines proper religious activity in 1.27 as visiting or looking out for orphans and widows. He states that this practice by the people of God is pure and undefiled before God the Father. I believe these exhortations by James are simply an expansion and correction for the faith community upon Jesus’ answer to the question of what the Greatest Commandment is. Jesus refused to separate right thinking and right doing, sharing with his disciples that loving God with all of their being (heart, mind, soul, and strength) is synonymous with, or inseparable from, loving their neighbors. Jesus

reserved the harshest criticisms for those who affirmed religious beliefs, participated in empty religious practices, and did not live lives that produced love for neighbors. In this way, Jesus echoed the sentiment of the Old Testament prophets whose cry was to “hear and obey” the word of God. One of their repeated areas of special concern as shared in the Biblical Foundations of chapter two was to care for the Orphans, Widows and Sojourners, representing the marginalized neighbors of Israel.

On the positive side, an argument could be made from the data analysis that the lack of engagement in Faith in Action does not stem from a sincerity of belief but from a failure to appropriate faith into everyday life. An adoption of practices may help bridge the gap between assent to Belief Statements and Faith in Action. In this way, right action can also contribute to the formation process for disciples of Jesus alongside right thinking.

### **Opportunity to Leverage Church for Neighborhood Engagement**

Over the past eight years of attempting to mobilize churches and Christians into neighborhood revitalization, I have often been asked my opinion of the greatest need facing the neighborhoods in which I’ve worked. My response is immediate and always the same: “The Church!” In the day-to-day work of neighborhood revitalization, a tangible presence of the Body of Christ engaging in wholistic restoration of marginalized neighbors and under-resourced neighborhoods is missing. In my personal journey of faith, the witness of the early church in ministering to marginalized neighbors and how those expressions of faith in action helped topple the ancient Roman worldview is a powerful testimony that solidified my faith and propelled me outward into the community and ultimately into neighborhood revitalization. The actions of those early Christians



were consistent with their beliefs even under threat of persecution. They picked babies up out of trash heaps and adopted them into their families, stayed behind to care for the sick and dying in cities evacuated because of the plague, included slaves at their tables, cared for the poor, fed widows, started hospitals, and so much more. Roman Emperor Julian famously reported that the “Impious Galileans support our poor in addition to their own.”

### **Neighborhood Revitalization as a Vehicle for Church Engagement in**

**Neighborhoods.** When I was introduced to neighborhood revitalization through participating in assets-based community development, I saw it as a natural vehicle for church mobilization and this same type of revolutionary ministry. It provided the intersection of kingdom work presented by Christopher Wright who argues for a missional hermeneutic of Scripture. Neighborhood revitalization is where the God of mission meets the people of mission in the arena of mission (Wright, *Mission of God* 22). The kingdom of heaven can be experienced for the marginalized among a community through neighborhood revitalization. An assets-based approach to community development sees the marginalized not as society sees them (the least of these) but as God sees them—a people of inherent dignity and infinite worth. They are not first viewed as people of need but as neighbors created in the image of God. The goal of neighborhood revitalization then is to build sustainable communities that draw on the most important assets in under-resourced neighborhoods: the neighbors themselves. Neighborhood revitalization is not an approach that contributes to cycles of dependency, but one that empowers neighbors to be the change, the hope to see, activating them in their vision for change.

Therefore, neighborhood revitalization represents an opportunity in our cultural moment to contextually fulfill the calling of the people of God to bring wholistic restoration to individuals and communities. Similar to the OWS who faced systemic barriers to loving God with all of their being due to their cultural context, today those experiencing situational and persistent poverty are at-risk in the whole of their being. The heart, mind, soul, and strength representing the different facets of a whole person in the Ancient Near East can be expressed today as the emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and physical lives of our marginalized neighbors. With the continued urbanization of our nation and world, displaced peoples find themselves experiencing the same geographical boundaries as those in poverty. Due to complex systemic issues covered in the literature review, such as disinvestment in urban centers, suburban sprawl, availability of affordable housing, discriminatory practices, and more, large populations of marginalized neighbors are concentrated in a few center city neighborhoods. The opportunity is present for churches to engage in neighborhoods, becoming participants in assets-based community development that aims to bring wholistic restoration to individuals and communities as a witness to the transformative power of the Gospel.

**Congregants Look to their Church to help Mobilize Faith in Action.** An encouraging finding from the research was the positive correlation between congregants' View of the Church and the frequency of Faith in Action (Table 4.14). This points to a great opportunity for churches to be agents of mobilization into neighborhood revitalization efforts. However, this must be reconciled with the relative lack of clarity in the church's role in ministering to marginalized neighbors. This will be addressed more fully in the discussion of "Calling" in major finding #3, but the strong correlation

between congregants' understanding of the role of the Church in helping activate their faith suggests a potential for churches becoming active agents of transformational change in under-resourced neighborhoods. One area in the responses to neighborhood engagement where pastors and NR practitioners were in agreement was in answering what God's preferred future was for the disinvested neighborhoods in their community; that response was "in the presence of the church." If God's kingdom is going to come to our marginalized neighborhoods, they believe that churches will be actively engaged in the process.

A barrier to mobilization for church engagement identified by pastors was the perceived restrictions of the institutional churches they lead. The feeling was that the expectation to sustain internal operations and programs of the church hindered their ability to successfully mobilize their congregations into externally focused ministries. This feeling was supported by their response to FAQ 4—been present at city or community events with the awareness and intentionality of living out my faith and serving as a witness to Jesus Christ—which was the lowest response ( $M = 2.75$ ) in the Faith in Action section of the survey for the sample of pastors. The focus group data also supported the survey in lack of understanding in the role of the church in neighborhood revitalization and marginalized populations. Little evidence was given by the pastors that they considered the role of the local church to be engaged in collective impact as the organized church. Instead, the pastors agreed their role, and by extension the role of the church, was to teach, equip, and empower the congregants. While 'sending' was mentioned by several pastors, what was being referenced was the sending of individuals out from the gathered church service into their everyday life as better equipped disciples

and evangelists on behalf of the Christian faith. Pastors did not see their role as leaders of the church to prescribe collective action.

The reviewed literature of early pioneers and practitioners tying neighborhood revitalization to missional impact for the Christian faith was aligned with this major finding. All three organizations cited—Focused Community Strategies (FCS), Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), Shepherd Community Center—had a foundation of church mobilization in their neighborhood engagement. CCDA, which has the most widespread engagement in neighborhoods throughout America, has ‘Church-Based’ as one of its eight core values. Shepherd CC stated that they would not have sustained and thrived in their neighborhood work without the backbone support of the church plant. Still today, they continuously try to engage churches from the wider Indianapolis community in their neighborhood efforts. I was unable to discover specific mobilization strategies for FCS. However, the influence of founder Dr. Robert Lupton on Christian engagement with under-resourced neighborhoods and poverty shows a continued commitment to resourcing the faith community and seeing the church mobilized into neighborhood-based restorative work.

One sustaining factor for NR practitioners, found in the qualitative data, was serving in community with other brothers and sisters in Christ. Another sustaining factor was getting to know and building relationships with neighbors through neighborhood initiatives. These data points are consistent with the Biblical imagery of the ‘ecclesia,’ a community of called-out ones whose purpose is to be a light for the larger community to which it belongs. Jesus’ words in Matthew 11.28-30 are brought to mind: “Come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” The Church as the body of

Christ living and active in the world is the community that receives the broken and marginalized into itself even as it builds itself up by loving one another. Paul's favorite analogous language for the Church was centered around family. The opportunity is ripe for churches to not only mobilize disciples into neighborhood revitalization but to receive marginalized neighbors into the faith community where they can join the family of God.

### **Rediscovering the Church's Calling to Marginalized Neighbors**

In Biblical Foundations, the people of God have always had a unique calling to bring wholistic restoration to the marginalized neighbors living among them. A case was made that God showed special and repeated concern for the Orphans, Widows, and Sojourners throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. The reason for this special concern was due to the Ancient Near Eastern context of an Agricultural-Patriarchy. OWS, as a collective group, represented those most at-risk population from the greatest pursuit of humanity—loving God with all of our being. The OWS were landless and fatherless so they faced significant barriers to loving God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength. God consistently calls his people to care for the OWS, gives them practices aimed at holistic restoration to adopt as a community, and then integrates them into the larger faith community. Jesus fulfilled this ministry to the marginalized through his reconciling work which restores the whole of our being and all of creation to God the Father. Further, Jesus modeled this outreach during his incarnational ministry, consistently drawing in those who were broken and marginalized in his society, restoring them holistically, and integrating them into the community of faith. Therefore, our very identity as the people of God should include restoration of the marginalized, and our ministry must be holistic in nature.

**Lack of Clarity around the Church's Role in Ministering to Marginalized Neighbors.** Strongly supported in the research as a reason for participation in neighborhood revitalization was a sense of calling by the practitioners. All fifteen practitioners mentioned a sense of calling as a biblical theme or understanding that both motivated and sustained their engagement in neighborhood work (Table 4.3). In addition, their response to VCQ 6—Church has a specific calling from God to restore the marginalized populations of a community—was the sample's highest response in the View of the Church section ( $M = 4.87$ ). Possibly the most powerful evidence for NR practitioners' sense of calling as a catalyst and sustaining force for engagement in neighborhood revitalization was found in the factor analysis of the survey. Compared to the congregants, practitioners are in another category entirely in their understanding of the Christian faith which is that Christians are called to minister to marginalized neighbors (Table 4.12). Not only did the practitioners have a strong sense of calling into the work but a strong sense of what that call from God entailed. The opportunity to participate in holistic ministry was mentioned by all but one of the practitioners (Table 4.10). Included among the characteristics of their restorative work in neighborhood revitalization were education, housing, natural environment, addiction, economic development, social justice, financial literacy, spiritual restoration, thriving families, peace-safety, opportunity and access, meaningful work, infrastructure, health, transportation, and sustainability. These characteristics clearly align with the case made above.

Such was not the case for the congregations participating in the survey, and, in fact, may point to a reason for lack of engagement by churches in neighborhood

revitalization. Congregants not participating in neighborhood revitalization were less certain about the sense of calling the church has in ministering to marginalized populations than were individual Christians participating in neighborhood revitalization. Their response to VCQ 6 was the lowest in the sample's View of the Church section ( $M = 4.31$ ). This finding was also true for the sample of pastors ( $M = 4.5$ ). Furthermore, when the pastors were asked directly what they felt God's heart was for under-resourced neighborhoods and what Biblical themes connected the two, not one of them mentioned a calling of God for his people to minister to the marginalized. Disunity in understandings of poverty, holistic ministry, or place-based ministry was also present showing a disconnect between personal callings of church leaders, missional activities by congregations and individual disciples of Jesus, and the organizational messaging present in organized local congregations de-emphasizing the Biblical theme of God's heart for the marginalized of a community. Regardless, a lack of clarity among congregations as to the church's role in holistic ministry to marginalized neighbors exists, and, therefore, a lack of engagement in under-resourced neighborhoods.

**Reclaiming the Church's Call towards Wholistic Ministry.** NR practitioners did connect their engagement as an expression of their faith, but most of them did not do so in connection with their local church. The interviewees participating in neighborhood revitalization did so through non-profits, parachurch ministries, and civic groups. The opportunity to participate in holistic ministry was cited as a motivating reason. They referred to the restoration of whole people and whole communities as a need in the city. A church's engagement in neighborhood revitalization can fulfill the calling of God to care for and restore marginalized neighbors when it addresses the whole of the person—

heart, mind, soul, and strength—and unleashes missional engagement by congregants; if not, congregants will find other avenues outside of the church to engage in holistic ministry. Collectively, this qualitative and quantitative data points to a major finding that increasing clarity of the church's role in holistic ministry to marginalized populations can catalyze and sustain engagement in neighborhood revitalization.

This brings to mind Paul's impassioned exhortation to the church of Rome to step into their identity. After a long, beautiful argument laid out in the first seven and a half chapters of Romans, Paul cries out for them to step into their calling:

For the anxious longing of creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons and daughters of God. For creation was subjected to futility, not willing, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. (Romans 8:19-22)

In a similar exhortation to the church of Corinth and at a similar point in his logical presentation of what Faith in Action should look like based on our identity in Christ, Paul pleads with those disciples to not allow their grace to be received in vain, but to step into their calling as ministers of reconciliation:

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting



their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)

The above is the very calling as the people of God, the inheritance as a collective faith community. As Christians rediscover their calling to the holistic restoration of their marginalized neighbors, they fulfill the ministry of the Church, the Body of Christ living and active in the world.

### **Neighborhood Engagement is Formative in the Discipleship Process**

My personal experience and observation has been that discipleship and mission have been decoupled from one another in the way in which churches communicate and provide opportunities for participation for Christians. The limitations of this study do not allow for a thorough discussion of discipleship and the “discipleship deficit” facing the American church today; therefore, the assumption will be made in the discussion of this major finding that there is in fact an ineffectiveness of local churches (in the general sense) in making disciples. At least a part of this complex reality in my own ministry experience has been the bifurcation of Discipleship and Evangelism, Formation and Sending, Growth and Mission, and Internal vs. External Ministry. The current state becomes confounding when you follow Jesus through the Gospels and observe how he went about making disciples. Jesus destroyed false lines and definitions. Attempting to mobilize disciples into neighborhood revitalization over the last eight years has proved difficult in part because this process is not seen as discipleship; at best this process is seen as an outreach opportunity and at worst this process is seen as an activity for “super-Christians,” non-profits, and city government. Increased engagement in neighborhood work will occur for local churches if they see it as stepping into the Way of Jesus, an

ever-present opportunity for discipleship and evangelism, and a formative experience that shapes disciples into the likeness of Christ.

**Engagement in Neighborhood Revitalization and Discipleship.** The qualitative data overwhelmingly pointed to participation in NR as a formative experience in discipleship for practitioners. The practitioners universally referenced discipleship/evangelism as both an initial motivator and sustaining factor in neighborhood engagement. Discipleship/evangelism was mentioned in every interview and multiple times throughout the different interviews. Discipleship also coincides with other data points such as the Incarnation and Hope tied to the Resurrection and Biblical understandings and themes that catalyze and sustain engagement. Explicitly on the formation of disciples, participation in NR as a step of faith points to the experience of engaging in neighborhoods as formative in the practitioners' discipleship journey. Finally, in response to what sustains their engagement, the theme of seeing movement emerged. Seeing movement in neighborhood work produced worship, trust, and intimacy with God. Deep belief that the God found in the metanarrative of Scripture, who actively participates in restoration, has continuity with the restoration they experience in neighborhood revitalization. A connection is present in the responses to seeing progress, change, and movement in neighborhood revitalization work and attributing it to God, and, therefore, a deeper knowing or experience of God. When seeking to understand engagement or disengagement in ministry to marginalized populations as a part of an individual's discipleship process and spiritual formation, the interviewees indicated that these actions helped them feel like a participant and contributor to the mission of God. They were able to bring something—time, skills, gifts—to others as a part of a larger

movement of God. The participatory nature of the work helped Biblical ideas of “co-heirs with Christ” and “ministers of reconciliation” to become a real experience for them which in turn sustained their engagement. God’s tangible activities experienced as mission was repeatedly referenced as both motivating and sustaining factors in neighborhood revitalization. Taken together, this finding strongly suggests that participation in NR can be formative in disciple-making.

In addition, the factor analysis helped draw out supporting evidence for this major finding. Both samples of congregants and NR practitioners interpreted the Belief Statements in the congregational survey into two distinct categories: (1) The Mission of God, (2) The Mission of Jesus. While the groupings of Belief Statements under the Mission of God were not unimportant to respondents, the questions grouped together as the missionary work of Jesus received a higher mean score from both congregants and practitioners. Further, the conditional breakdown of congregants indicating they ‘Often’ participated in ministry to marginalized populations and were present in under-resourced neighborhoods with the intention of living out their faith also grouped the survey questions tied to the missionary work of Jesus (FAQ 4 through 7) as more important to their everyday lives.

A possible interpretation of this data synthesized with the qualitative data cited above is that engagement in NR can be a crucial motivator and sustaining process by which local churches help in the discipleship pathway for their congregants, aligning with the Biblical Foundations presented in the literature review. The special concern God shows throughout the OT for the OWS as a marginalized group within the ANE context means that the very identity of the people of God as collective faith community should

produce engagement with marginalized neighbors. Jesus fulfilled this identity, both in the Transcendent and Immanent sense, and now his disciples step into the same identity and ministry. Formation into the likeness of Christ should occur as Christians when we participate in ministry to the marginalized and step into the holistic restoration of under-resourced neighborhoods.

**Tangible Experience as a More Effective Way of Making Learners of Jesus.**

The pathway of discipleship must include tangible experiences and not be reduced to content presentation. The lines mentioned above must be erased for appropriation of faith. For example, all fifteen interviewees stated that both the desire to share their faith with others and the desire to share with the marginalized of their community the benefits of the Christian life conferred to them by the Gospel were motivators to engaging in neighborhood work. Other experiences mentioned were activities such as block parties, door knocking for SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, serving through neighborhood schools, neighborhood clean-up days, and neighborhood tours. Journeying into marginalized communities, seeing the situation for themselves, and meeting neighbors was a persistent catalyst for engagement. Participation in these experiences caused formation to occur, and the formation experienced sustained participation in neighborhood engagement.

For congregants, the gap of engagement in the same journey into the space of marginalized neighbors in under-resourced neighborhoods is a missed opportunity for these formative experiences in discipleship. A contributing factor of disengagement likely stems from a lack of these catalytic experiences. A shocking finding from the Congregational Survey was that less than 1 percent (eight out of 160) of congregants

indicated that they were ‘Often’ present in under-resourced neighborhoods with the intention of living out their faith. The absence from under-resourced neighborhoods and the marginalized neighbors living in them showed in the mean scores of FAQ 6 ( $M = 2.90$ ) and FAQ 7 ( $M = 2.37$ ), the lowest responses in the Faith in Action section for congregants. Pastors had a much higher mean response than congregants for FAQ 6 ( $M = 3.50$ ) and FAQ 7 ( $M = 3.63$ ) but were still the second and third lowest responses of frequency of Faith in Action. Only one of the eight pastors shared a personal story of being present in the identified under-resourced neighborhood when asked directly to do so in the focus group. This finding may indicate a dissonance in the survey responses versus the reality of engaging in neighborhoods as an expression of faith. If churches are to mobilize and sustain engagement in neighborhood revitalization as part of a discipleship pathway, a bridge to this gap of engagement must be built. In this way congregants can join with God in his mission or reconciliation and ministry to marginalized neighbors so that they can follow in the way of Jesus and experience the transformative ministry of the people of God.

### **Ministry Implications of the Findings**

If received and leveraged, the ministry implications from the research are manifold. A fundamental reorientation of missional engagement needs to occur within local churches. The idea of “outreach” that permeates American church culture is not in alignment with God’s heart for the marginalized neighbors living among us. As such, an us-them mentality is created that is inconsistent with the commands of Scripture. Instead, ministries should reflect deeply both on their posture and approach to ministering to those pushed to the edges of our society. Taken as a case study of sorts, the way in which God

called his people to show special concern for the OWS should provide the framework for churches today. God first established identification between Israel and the OWS as a collective group. The marginalized were not separate from the Israelites. The marginalized were not the 'other' but the same, sharing in a common identity. Secondly, God established a set of practices that not only tangibly showed God's great love for the marginalized but also transformed the people of God as a community to more appropriately reflect the very character of God. These practices were aimed at the holistic restoration of the OWS, not merely as temporary fixes for immediate needs. Finally, God established a means through which the OWS should be integrated or reintegrated back into the faith community.

Jesus, even as he pursued his ultimate mission of reconciliation of all things to the Father, fulfilled the call of the people of God to reach out to others in all aspects. As Jesus went toward Jerusalem, his journey was marked by ministry to his marginalized neighbors. The way of Jesus should transform our ministries not as an extra add-on or program but as a fundamental characteristic of what it means to be the people of God.

**Transforming the Local Outreach Ministries.** If the profile of local outreach ministries were to transfer their focus to become identifying, inclusive, holistic, restorative, integrating, and place-based, the next step for the local church would be a contextualization of which practices to adopt in order to bring tangible transformation to individuals and communities experiencing marginalization. While the practices God gave to Israel (Gleaning, Marriage Laws, Festival Inclusion) are still able to teach us principles, they are no longer culturally appropriate in today's context. Therefore, the case was made that neighborhood revitalization and the approach of assets-based

community development incorporate the principles outlined by God for Israel's care of the OWS. Neighborhood revitalization is a vehicle to move the church into the lives of their marginalized neighbors and live out the ministry of Jesus that should be a marker of a church and its disciples. Neighborhood revitalization does so in a way that upholds the inherent dignity and infinite worth of neighbors created in the image of God by no longer seeing them as people of need but as people filled with the capacity to be the change they envision for their lives and community.

The final question then becomes, How do we mobilize and sustain engagement in neighborhood revitalization by local churches? While the solution is complex and multi-variant, some important implications emerged from the research applicable to ministry. Highest among them is the importance for churches to create opportunities for congregants to journey into the neighborhood with brothers and sisters in Christ and to have tangible ministry experiences among their marginalized neighbors. These implications synthesized several of the data points presented in chapter four: the high correlation between the view of the role of the church and frequency of faith in action, the initial motivators of invitation and steps of faith, sustaining factors like serving in community with others, and seeing tangible examples of movement. None of these outcomes are possible without opportunities for disciples to journey into the neighborhood.

**Neighborhood Revitalization as a Discipleship Pathway.** Outreach ministry needs to be reframed in the context of discipleship. This journeying outward into the neighborhood for local congregations helps the local body of Christ and the individual disciples of Jesus to be shaped into the likeness of Christ by stepping into his ministry.

The negative correlation between Belief Statements and engagement in ministry to the marginalized and under-resourced neighborhoods clearly shows that ministry must include all aspects of learning. Similar to the holistic restoration of marginalized neighbors, ministries should engage all of our being—heart, mind, soul, and strength. Discipleship experiences must be an effect of all our intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual selves. These different parts of intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual selves need to be integrated into learning experiences that activate the whole of our being so our faith is appropriated into everyday life. Part of the discipleship deficit within our cultural moment is due to the segregation of the various parts of the whole and does not create experiential learning opportunities that can be seamlessly applied to our everyday lives. These experiences cannot occur without journeying outward and creating opportunities for tangible experiences.

This finding should not surprise anyone if the way of Jesus is truly allowed to inform and transform our disciple-making pathways. In the synoptic Gospels, the invitation to the first disciples was to “Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” Stepping into the journey, following in the way of Jesus, leads to transformation. Right thinking was not required up front but was instead shaped along the way. What was required up front was a response to the invitation to step into the life and ministry of Jesus. The disciples had the opportunity to participate actively in Jesus’s ministry to the marginalized; therefore, this ministry became a marker of the early church. Similarly in the Gospel of John, Jesus proclaims, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” While I do not believe Jesus was necessarily being formulaic with these words, certainly the total witness of the Gospels reinforces the ordering of this axiom. As one follows the way of



Jesus, the Truth is revealed through the experiencing of it, and, therefore, the abundant Life promised by Jesus is found. If the same holds true for disciples and disciple-making today, then church activity should include tangible experiences of ministries with our marginalized neighbors and neighborhoods. Such experiences should have the intent of holistic restoration and integration into the community of faith as its hoped-for outcome because that is the way of Jesus.

To be clear, this experience should not be at the expense of “right thinking.” Alignment with historical orthodoxy and affirmation of the importance of the fundamental Belief Statement of the Christian faith for our everyday lives are not to be thrown out in the pursuit of experience. The content is still important. The content cannot be divorced from experience, and the experience itself should be understood as content shaping the disciple. When looking at which Belief Statements were correlated to those indicating they were ‘Often’ present in under-resourced neighborhoods and ministering to marginalized neighbors, the questions attributed to the mission of Jesus by the factor analysis rose to the surface. This finding was supported by the qualitative data both for Biblical understandings—Incarnation, Hope—and the motivating and sustaining factors for engagement—evangelism/discipleship, step of faith, participating in wholistic ministry—by NR practitioners.

**Participation in Ministry as Content and Formation.** Again, unsurprisingly, the content of our faith that is most effective at mobilizing churches and disciples into neighborhood revitalization is Jesus Christ. This fact should be an encouragement to church ministries and a simple reminder that Jesus is not to be assumed in our teaching but should in fact be the culmination—or telos—of all our teaching. Alan Hirsch and

Michael Frost call for a ‘ReJesus-ing’ in our cultural moment (41). Having Christianity as the center of American society for so long, Christians gradually took for granted the way of Jesus and Jesus himself as the beginning, middle, and end of our faith. Various strategies for church growth were laid over the life of Jesus because Jesus was assumed into the fabric of our operations. However, with the movement of the church and Christianity from the center of society toward the edges, the need to make Jesus explicit arises. Now is the time to allow Jesus to transform our ministries by reintroducing Jesus into all our content, especially our outreach into the local mission field.

As disciples of Jesus step into the way of Jesus and begin engaging in neighborhood revitalization and ministry to marginalized neighbors, a second shift in approach should coincide with the shift away from personal betterment toward community development. That shift is to more closely align to the likeness of how Jesus went about his ministry to the marginalized than to what our local outreach ministries look like in action today. As a summary and synthesis of the data, literature, and reflection by the researcher, engagement in neighborhood revitalization should be transformed by the following four factors as implications for ministry: Posture, Proximity, Presence, Place.

- Posture—One should come as a learner instead of an expert, as a servant yes, but a servant that reflects Jesus who entered our story, faced our experiences, knelt down into the mess with us, using his power and influence in the service of others. The identification of our need for Jesus allows our posture to be reciprocal.

- Proximity—Drawing near physically to our marginalized neighbors is the true definition of proximity in which the process of removing barriers such as tables that create an us/them separation is done. This process is drawing near to those whom society has pushed to the edges and entering into their space on their terms.
- Presence—This could also be called ‘perseverance.’ Presence refers to the repeated presence in the lives of our marginalized neighbors that produces trust. The marginalized neighbors are used to churches and non-profit organizations coming in to fulfill their program, ministry, serve-day, etc. What they have not experienced as much of are those same people returning to simply be with them without an agenda.
- Place—Place is the idea of going into the neighborhood instead of expecting them to come to our church or our ministry. Having a smaller, defined location of impact like a neighborhood also helps in terms of focus and allows for the above-mentioned repeated presence. These two concepts are the two linchpins of place-based ministry.

A quick word of caution: unless a ministry is committed to the first three, they should refrain from the fourth. Do not enter the space of marginalized neighbors for isolated events and self-serving ministry opportunities. This action merely reinforces the faulty narrative that our marginalized neighbors are people to be used, recipients of broken promises, and are unworthy of true investment.

The research showed that in addition to the extremely difficult task of mobilizing the church into a ministry that includes relational long-term commitment, and sacrificial investment, the added difficulty of recapturing the role of the church in ministry to

marginalized populations is present in the first place. A significant finding from the congregational survey was that the lowest agreement to the View of the Church by both congregants and pastors by a fairly wide margin was the unique call of the Church to minister to the marginalized (VCQ 6). From a content delivery perspective, an opportunity is offered for local churches to reintroduce this identity to the people of God. The content itself must be rooted in the Biblical Foundations of holistic ministry and not in ministries contributing to dependency which is the default mode for many churches when acting on this call.

The content requires contextualization as well. The fact that large collections of marginalized neighbors living among our cities are concentrated into a few under-resourced neighborhoods is not necessarily self-evident. This reality is a new learning for most congregants, one that must be introduced, taught, and shepherded toward understanding. One of the few unifying beliefs of the Christian faith I have experienced in ten years of ministry in Evansville is the simple command of Jesus to love our neighbors. This command is not as intuitive or unifying to love our neighborhoods. Disciples of Jesus understand that they are to love their neighbors where they are—where they live, work, play, and worship, but do they understand that they are to love their neighbors where they are called—to the least of these, the marginalized living among us? They do not fully understand that the nature of ministry within that calling is to be holistic and restorative, not merely to meet temporary needs that contribute to the very cycles of dependency we are called to eliminate. Work will need to be done in order to know the city and all the complex nuances of disinvestment, generational poverty, and place-based ministry.

**Reflections on Church Growth Movement and Missional Engagement.**

Though not addressed in the literature review or research, the impact of the Church Growth Movement seems to be a contributing factor to the overall lack of community engagement as an expression of ministry. When the unspoken (or even spoken) definition of success for a church is how many people attend a church service, the internal inertia for mobilizing congregants will ultimately be in support of the systems that meet that metric of success. This internal inertia means that when Congregants put their faith in action, their faith will be expressed primarily through the in-built ministries that make Sunday services happen. For congregants, ministry has come to be defined by serving with youth in the church building for an hour, leading singing, welcoming people, and other roles to make internal processes work. The greatest purpose of the congregant is to invite someone, or better yet, bring someone on their arm to a Sunday service. While internal mechanisms were not a focus of this dissertation, and therefore a limitation of the study, the gravitational pull of the internal mechanisms of the local church in the Church Growth era was referenced by pastors in the focus group and was presented as a data point under research question 3. From the pastors' perspective, they see the institutional church and perceived expectation of their role as pastors as a significant barrier to mobilization. The ministry implication for these observations lies in a redefining of success for local churches. Instead of only counting attendance at church services, a church could also count how many of their disciples are joining with God in his mission of reconciliation. If a church were to express their ministry to marginalized neighbors through a neighborhood revitalization effort, they could measure formation or growth in disciple-making by those participating in neighborhood engagement in a more

comprehensive metric of success. Each individual congregation would need to define their own metrics and goals for impact, but the aim would be to introduce a sending metric that slowly reorders the natural functions of the local church toward external engagement with the community.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The complex multi-variant nature of the ministry problem addressed by the research project presented a limitation in the study from the beginning. When seeking to mobilize churches into neighborhood revitalization, numerous potential approaches to the research questions exists. Even before the research questions were constructed, a case had to be made that neighborhood revitalization is a natural expression of ministry of today's church to fulfill its unique call to minister to the marginalized neighbors living within a community. Many questions had to be answered as to who the center of the research would revolve around: Would it be individual disciples of Jesus? Pastors and ministry leaders? Congregants? Local churches as a collective? Or potentially even marginalized neighbors themselves? Since the heart of the story of the researcher was the ministry problem of mobilizing a local church body at the time of framing the research questions, the research began there. However, no local churches actively participating in neighborhood revitalization at the organizational level were present at the time of the actual research. Therefore, individual disciples of Jesus participating in neighborhood revitalization as an expression of their faith as well as pastors not doing so were added to the sample of data collection. This led to a large amount of input and data that made the analysis and synthesis vast and difficult to interpret.

Another limitation of the study came from an unexpected job change in the middle of the project. I went from pursuing research questions that would help catalyze and sustain the local church, of which I was on staff, in neighborhood engagement to working at a non-profit hoping to see many local congregations and individual disciples of Jesus step into neighborhood work as an expression of ministry for local missional engagement. While this development was beneficial in many ways, the change also expanded the focus of the study and limited access to the congregants participating in neighborhood revitalization as well as applications for ministry implications learned from the pre-intervention study. This occurrence did not change or alter the procedure for the administration of research instruments but broadened the scope of the research to include more participants than the original design. I would not categorize this as a limitation so much as an alteration.

After conducting the research and doing the analysis of the data, the limitations of the instruments to address the specific questions of the research become apparent especially in consideration of the quantitative data collected via the congregational survey. The appreciative inquiry questions selected for the qualitative data collection were easily transferrable and could be generalized among pastors and neighborhood revitalization practitioners. Questions were designed to directly ask what motivates and sustains engagement in neighborhood work, the biblical themes and understandings that catalyze and sustain engagement, and the identification of potential gaps in church engagement in under-resourced neighborhoods and ministry to marginalized neighbors. The Congregational Survey on the other hand was designed in an attempt to show correlations between core Beliefs Statements of the Christian faith, congregants' view of

the church, and frequency of Faith in Action. In trying to not be explicit with the connections, limitations were presented as to how directly those correlations apply. Were the research to be conducted again, the survey questions could be more directly stated, asking congregants themselves about their perceptions of the correlations between beliefs, the church, and their expressions of Faith in Action. In addition, at least one question on the frequency of service inside the normal programs and ministries of the organizational church should have been added. This addition would have given comparative data to see if congregants' service in these internal ministries were a potential barrier to mobilization into neighborhood revitalization.

The final major limitation the study was found in the lack of scholarly research done on the topic. No scholarly journal articles directly addressed the mobilization of Western churches into assets-based community development (ABCD). A handful of articles on ABCD and church engagement in Africa existed, but the context was so different that the content was not directly applicable to the research designed for this project. Similarly, there was little at the popular level that could be pulled for a descriptive understanding of what catalyzes and sustains neighborhood engagement in local churches. This literature was reviewed but approached as individual case studies, and more examples were desired in order to extract common themes and best practices. A limitation of the study lied in the inability to build on previous research done in the area of mobilizing churches to engage in neighborhood revitalization.

### **Unexpected Observations**

There were several unexpected observations within the research. The most glaring being the first major finding. When research question number 1 was constructed, the



hope was that certain Biblical themes and understandings would emerge that could then be shared with local churches as recommendations for content to deliver to their Congregants in order to inspire and equip them to engage in neighborhood revitalization. While certain themes did emerge from the qualitative data collected from the disciples of Jesus participating in neighborhood revitalization, the negative correlation between Belief Statements and Faith in Action was certainly an unforeseen development. Surprisingly, the negative correlation held across all of the questions for the neighborhood revitalization participants, still it was reinforced by the sample of congregants who showed a positive correlation between Belief Statements and FAQ 1 through 5 but a negative correlation to FAQ 6 and 7—the frequency of ministering to marginalized neighbors and being present in under-resourced neighborhoods with the intention of living out their faith. This negative correlation also held true when a conditional breakdown was done for congregants responding to FAQ 6 and 7 with ‘Often.’ Taken together, a strong case emerges that right thinking does not necessarily lead to right action. This finding was unexpected because my Enlightenment-influenced paradigm begins with the framework that the correct set of ideas or beliefs produces proper actions. Societal education institutions set up learning along the scaffolding of this understanding. Church institutions and systems are predominately built upon this structure. As stated in the discussion of the major finding, this finding does not minimize the importance of right thinking, but instead causes one to reinvestigate how that right thinking takes place for a disciple of Jesus.

Another unexpected observation not discussed in length in the dissertation was the disconnect between activities of the church and an understanding of place-based

ministry for those not participating in neighborhood revitalization as an expression of their faith. As mentioned in the data presentation, the focus group of pastors had a difficult time concentrating the discussion on a localized neighborhood even though the questions were designed to do so and the facilitator interjected on two different occasions to keep the conversation neighborhood based. The discussion kept trending toward generalized observations of poverty instead of a specific place, neighborhood, or geographical focus. Survey FAQ 7—being present in under-resourced neighborhood with the intention of living out my faith—supported this observation of a lack of understanding of place-based ministry as it scored significantly lower than the rest of the Faith in Action section questions. An identified gap in church engagement in neighborhood revitalization may be apparent in that church leaders themselves as well as congregants are not thinking place-based and systemically in their approach to ministry among marginalized populations. Due to my personal experience in neighborhood-based ministry over the last eight years and being steeped in the missional literature through the Asbury Theological Seminary cohort, I went into the focus group wrongly assuming that my peers in ministry were aligned with an understanding of importance of place-based ministry. Simply helping ministers gain an understanding of place-based ministry represents an unforeseen opportunity to help shift local congregations towards neighborhood revitalization and deeper impact in their outreach.

The final unexpected observation not discussed at all in the presentation of data was in finding a major difference between what could be called ‘tangible and intangible’ expressions of Faith in Action. When conducting the data analysis of the congregational survey across all three data samples (congregants, pastors, practitioners), an interesting

observation was made on the respondents' frequency of participating in the various Faith in Action questions. Of the seven questions in that section, two could be labeled as 'intangible'—FAQ 3 dealing with prayer and FAQ 5 dealing with relationships—and the other five questions as 'tangible' expressions of faith—serving, going, doing. The intangible expressions of Faith in Action had a 53 percent 'Often-Regular' response and a 13 percent 'Seldom-Never' response (average  $M = 3.60$ ). The tangible expressions of Faith in Action had a 28 percent 'Often-Regular' response and a 41 percent 'Seldom-Never' response (average  $M = 2.87$ ). A disconnect between physical acts of restoration as an important expression of acts of faith may exist or maybe participating in intangible acts like prayer and building relationships is simply easier. The pastors' view of poverty shared in qualitative data from the focus group supported this potential theme in the research. The collective discussion showed the prevalence of a dichotomy between spiritual and physical restoration in ministry. The church leaders saw spiritual poverty as differentiated from physical poverty and placed a higher priority on spiritual poverty as the focus of Christian ministry. The comments seemed to be linked in the minds of the focus group participants to the perceived spiritual poverty of marginalized neighbors as the underlying issue and led to the unexpected analysis of the Faith in Action section of the congregational survey just mentioned. While this finding cannot draw conclusive determination because the survey tool was not designed to address the question, this finding is at least evidence that the perceived dichotomy of spiritual and physical ministry works itself out in how faith is lived out in actions and could be a topic for further research. If pastors prioritize spiritual well-being above physical, and congregants are more willing to participate in intangible ministry activities than tangible, then a gap

has been identified between neighbors holistically marginalized from their communities and church engagement.

## **Recommendations**

### **Create an Intervention Study**

This study was designed as pre-intervention to discover biblical themes and understandings, motivating and sustaining factors, and potential gaps for church engagement in neighborhood revitalization. The major findings from the research present a potential framework to build an intervention study that would catalyze church mobilization into neighborhood engagement. A pre and post-intervention survey could be done to support the research and contribute to this field of study. In this way the efficacy of the data points and major findings could be proven, or different pathways for mobilization could be built also utilizing the data if the intervention proved ineffective. Certainly, many potential pathways for engagement by local churches into under-resourced neighborhoods in their community exists, and a collection of studies would benefit the Church to learn best practices for mobilization into this vital ministry.

### **Find Local Congregations Ready for Mobilizing into Kingdom Impact**

In my conversational experience with pastors and individual disciples of Jesus about the connection between our collective call as the Body of Christ to minister to the marginalized and the contextual importance of neighborhood engagement for churches, I have witnessed two distinct responses. The first is glazed-over eyes and little-to-no comprehension. The second is an eagerness, a leaning-in, and immediate apprehension. In my excitement to see all churches in my city join with God in His mission to the marginalized, frustration grows at the seeming lack of movement among the Church of

Evansville. Focusing on those in whom God has already been working and to pour focused attention on creating effective mobilization pathways for them would be more advantageous. In the missional literature, a core concept is finding what God is already up to and joining with Him. This same principle applies to the renewal of the Church.

### **Create a Simplified Neighborhood Engagement Framework**

A potential future barrier to church mobilization into neighborhood revitalization is the complexity of assets-based community development. As an approach, ABCD has been around for about thirty years. ABCD is difficult to apply in practice even for professional community development practitioners. ABCD includes facilitating vision and listening sessions, planning and steering committees, quality of life plans, asset-mapping, resident and stakeholder working groups, and much more. Churches will need to adapt ABCD to be more agile and adaptive for easier access for congregants. One example of simplification was presented in the literature: boiling down the overarching principles to Listen-Align-Act-Measure-Repeat. More work will need to be done in this vein. The organization I work for, Community One, is building a more accessible framework for engagement in neighborhoods based on ABCD principles. We have coined it 'Love Your Neighborhood.' Neighborhood work in under-resourced areas will never be easy as disinvestment occurs slowly over many decades and generational poverty is systemic. Revitalization and restoration of marginalized neighbors will not occur overnight, but a simplified framework for engagement can help churches as they journey into the neighborhood.

### **Redefine Definition of Success for Local Churches Around Sending**

This is a general recommendation for all churches that can be easily applied to neighborhood engagement. Thankfully, several pioneers are leading the way in this endeavor. The Reveal study attempts to measure overall health of the church and includes a measurement of a church's Faith in Action. LifeWay's Discipleship Pathway Assessment looks at a church and/or individual's current state of discipleship and includes measurements around such items as serving others, sharing Christ, and exercising faith. Many churches connecting to the Gospel Fluency conversation are counting how many gospel conversations Congregants have in their everyday lives. J.D. Greear offers ten 'plumb lines' churches can use to gauge if they are keeping sending at the center of the culture of their lives and church. In the area of neighborhood revitalization specifically, the Lupton Center has created a Flourishing Neighborhood Index measuring the health of a community across economic, social, and structural indicators. This instrument could be used by a local church to pursue impact in the neighborhoods they desire to invest in and reframe the narrative of engagement for their church.

### **Study on Faith in Action with Church Growth Movement—Internal vs. External**

Exploring the effects of the Church Growth Movement as barriers to church mobilization was a limitation of this study. Additional research questions could include: How does prioritizing attendance at local churches and sustaining their internal ministries and programs inhibit or prevent community engagement? How much Kingdom resources are spent on things that ultimately hold no consequence and could instead be spent on restorative ministries for marginalized neighbors? Do our churches cram so much activity

into the lives of Congregants that they no longer have the bandwidth needed for relational investment in marginalized neighbors? I am in the camp of those who do not believe there is anything inherently wrong with large churches or excellent Sunday services, but I could not help but ask these questions and more over the course of this study and personal engagement in under-resourced neighborhoods. A study measuring the impact of the Church Growth Movement on Faith in Action would be a fascinating contribution to aid in the question of how to mobilize and sustain church engagement in neighborhood revitalization.

### **Postscript**

The first step on this journey was taken in 2012 with an invitation to go door-knocking in an under-resourced neighborhood alongside other members of my local church. That experience began a transformational journey that gave expression to the general sense that the people of God are called to be ministers of reconciliation, restorers of creation, and to engage in meaningful holistic ministry with the “least of these” living among us in our cities, communities, and neighborhoods. As I participated in NR, I was connected to a process that conferred value and worth onto marginalized neighbors through assets-based community development. I saw God move in tangible ways that buoyed my faith and deepened my relationship with our Father in heaven. I felt more intimacy with Jesus as the savior I found in the Gospels was not merely words on a page but living and active in his restoration of all things to the Father, especially among our marginalized neighbors. I also felt real empowerment from the Holy Spirit as the accomplishments of the revitalization efforts I was participating in were far beyond my personal capacity. Ever since that first step on the journey, I have wanted to help local

churches and individual disciples of Jesus join with God in His restorative work in neighborhoods. Unfortunately, my efforts over the last eight years have been met with limited success from a mobilization perspective. Through exciting launches, unstained engagement, fits and starts and false starts, pilot initiatives, hundreds of conversations, going first and inviting, and many more activities in the neighborhood, so far the Church of Evansville has not stepped into its inheritance as those called out by God to care for the marginalized in a way that brings holistic restoration to individuals and communities.

The literature review strengthened my resolve to continue to tackle the ministry problem of how to catalyze and sustain church engagement in neighborhood revitalization. With growing urbanization leading to an increase of displaced peoples adding to the existing populations facing situational and persistent poverty in our urban cores, this cultural moment is ripe for churches to step into holistic ministry to our marginalized neighbors and serve as a witness to the power of the Gospel to bring restoration and transformation. Exploring the Biblical Foundations for how God called Israel to care for the OWS among them and how Jesus fulfilled this calling throughout his Incarnational ministry further solidified NR as a contextually appropriate ministry for the Church.

The conducting of the research, particularly the one-on-one interviews with NR practitioners, served as much needed encouragement. Hearing their stories of engagement in neighborhoods and how they connected it to a natural application of their Christian faith was a powerful reminder that mobilization into the work is possible. These brothers and sisters in Christ have experienced a growth in discipleship by joining with Jesus in his ministry to the least of these. Even among the pastors and congregants who are not



actively participating in NR, potential pathways emerged from the data for how to help local churches mobilize toward engagement. What began four years ago as a seemingly impossible task now seems achievable or at very least the opportunity to resource the local church in effective mobilization strategies seems readily available. Whether they utilize them or not is up to church leaders and disciples, but the solution to the ministry problem is no longer based on anecdotal observation and failed personal experience. The solution is now supported through solid research and learnings from practitioners and pioneers in the field. The feeling on the other side of this long journey is one of hope.

N.T. Wright states that the, “Future hope in Jesus leads to a vision of present hope—the basis for all Christian mission (191).” Inheritance in the Christian faith is one of hope for the future rooted in the historical realities of the completed works of Jesus Christ. The journey from here to there, from the current state of the world to the consummation of heaven, is where the joy of experiencing our Lord and Savior lies. He is reconciling all things to himself, making all things new. When Christians join with Jesus in his ministry, they come to know him more. Nowhere is this hope more needed than among those who cannot find hope in the current systems and structures of this world—those pushed to the margins of our society, those deemed the least of these, those with significant barriers to loving God with all of their being. To those neighbors we proclaim: Christ is Victorious! Then Christians get the amazing honor and privilege of giving them glimpses of that victory by bringing holistic restoration to their lives and God’s physical creation in which they live. Christians give them glimpses of heaven, the coming kingdom, breaking through in their everyday lives. Their response is beyond one’s control—that is the work of the Holy Spirit—but one can rest in the fact that they have

experienced the transformative love of Jesus Christ that meets them where they are. God uses this ministry to shape and transform his Church into the likeness of Christ.

This is not the end of the journey, rather, it is a new beginning. A fresh start informed by research and best practices. God has positioned me at a local non-profit with the title of ‘Neighborhood Revitalization Director,’ and with the mission of helping Christians love their neighbor. This includes helping them love their neighbor where they are (live, work, play) in the normal rhythms of their lives. However, it ultimately includes loving their neighbor where we are called—to our marginalized neighbors. God has moved me out of a staff position at a local church to help mobilize the Church of Evansville. I now feel better equipped to do my part to share this message and call my brothers and sisters to step into this important ministry and resource the church to reclaim our participation in bearing hope to our world.

*The Lord protects the sojourners, he supports the orphans and widows, and thwarts the ways of the wicked. – Psalm 146.9*

*I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you. – John 14.18*

*Behold the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will be no longer any death; there will be no longer any mourning, or crying, or pain; for the first things have passed away. – Revelation 21.3-4*

*Amen.*

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Interview and Focus Group Questions**

#### **NR Practitioner Interviews:**

1. What were your initial inspirations and motivations to get involved in place-based neighborhood revitalization work?
2. Reflecting on your entire experience in neighborhood engagement, remember a time you felt most alive, motivated, excited about your engagement. Describe circumstances and your involvement.
3. What has sustained your engagement in the neighborhood?
4. What have been the most important experiences, lessons in belief, or steps of faith that have occurred for you in place-based neighborhood revitalization work?
5. Make three wishes for the future of the neighborhood.

#### **Focus Group Questions:**

1. If you had to classify an area on the Westside of Evansville as an under-resourced neighborhood, what would it be? What do you believe are the contributing factors?
2. Describe the situation of the neighborhood, both physical environment and the people. Now, what are the perceptions of the surrounding community—think of how people talk about the neighborhood.
3. What do you feel God's heart is for the community? What Biblical themes show this?
4. What do you believe is the church's role in neighborhood revitalization?
5. What barriers do you face in leadership and organizationally in mobilizing your congregation into neighborhood engagement?
6. Based on your understanding of the Mission of God, make three wishes for the future of the neighborhood.

## APPENDIX B

### Congregational Survey

#### Belief Statements:

How Important are these faith statements to your everyday life?

1. I believe in the Holy Trinity. I believe in the one true God that eternally exists as three persons—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—and that these three are one God.

☐ Extremely Important ☐ Very Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not too Important ☐ Not at all Important

2. I believe that God created all things through Jesus and all of existence is sustained by the Trinitarian God.

☐ Extremely Important ☐ Very Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not too Important ☐ Not at all Important

3. I believe that God's Mission derives from His very nature—the Father sends the Son, the Father and Son send the Spirit, the Father, Son, Spirit send the church into the world.

☐ Extremely Important ☐ Very Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not too Important ☐ Not at all Important

4. I believe the second person of the Trinity (the Son) assumed human form in the person of Jesus Christ, lived life among humanity, and is completely both God and man.

☐ Extremely Important ☐ Very Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not too Important ☐ Not at all Important

5. I believe Jesus Christ was crucified for the rebellion of creation against God, for the purpose of reconciling all things to God.

☐ Extremely Important ☐ Very Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not too Important ☐ Not at all Important

6. I believe Jesus Christ was raised physically from the dead on the third day following his death on the cross, appearing to many followers, and is the foretaste/sign of a future hope brought into the present reality.

☐ Extremely Important ☐ Very Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not too Important ☐ Not at all Important

7. I believe that Jesus Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father and reigns over the Kingdom of Heaven that is being established by God.

☐ Extremely Important ☐ Very Important ☐ Somewhat Important ☐ Not too Important ☐ Not at all Important

**View of the Church:**

Indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the nature and purpose of the church:

1. Church is a community of people with God, through Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, living life with one another locally, connected to all other Christians through the world and history.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

2. Church is the assembled or gathered disciples of Jesus Christ

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

3. The organizational structure of the church should be to build up the body of Christ (internal) and equip the saints for ministry (external).

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

4. The primary practices of church can be described as Worship, Formation (or Discipleship), Community, and Mission.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

5. The purpose of church is to carry on the reconciling work of Jesus Christ by proclaiming the Gospel and being a light to the world.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

6. Church has a specific calling from God to restore the marginalized populations of a community.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

**Personal Faith in Action:**

Indicate the frequency of your personal involvement in the following activities over the past year:

1. Served at/with/through a local non-profit or parachurch ministry in my community.  
☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never
2. Served with/through my local church out in the community.  
☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never
3. Built genuine relationships with people not self-identifying as Christians.  
☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never
4. Been present at city or community events with the awareness and intentionality of living out my faith and serving as a witness to Jesus Christ.  
☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never
5. Prayed for the common good of my city and for the Kingdom of God to reign in it as in Heaven.  
☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never
6. Have served or been present with a marginalized population (e.g. homeless, impoverished, felons, etc.) in my community.  
☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never
7. Have spent time in an under-resourced neighborhood in my community with the purpose of living out my faith.  
☐ Often ☐ Regularly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Never

## APPENDIX C

### Consent to Participate in Research

#### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

##### *Church Engagement in Neighborhood Revitalization*

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Austin Maxheimer from the Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are a congregation leader and/or been engaged in neighborhood revitalization efforts in the Evansville Metropolitan Area.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to come to the Community One offices for a one-time interview or focus group and will take approximately 60-90 minutes. The content of the discussions will be recorded and secured by the researcher to ensure confidentiality.

Your family will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number or initials will be used instead of your name. Although confidentiality will be encouraged during focus groups, it cannot be guaranteed.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, please tell Austin. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want. You can ask Austin questions any time about anything in this study.

Contact information: Email - [austin.maxheimer@community1.org](mailto:austin.maxheimer@community1.org). Phone – 812.453.4592

Signing this paper means that you have read this or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

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Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

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Date Signed

## Appendix D

## Survey Correlations Raw Data

## Congregants Correlations

	BS1	BS2	BS3	BS4	BS5	BS6	BS7	RC1	RC2	RC3	RC4	RC5	RC6	Action1	Action2	Action3	Action4	Action5	Action6	Action7
BS1	1	0.69991	0.473771	0.143319	0.134782	0.203711	0.099265	0.043773	0.101992	-0.04129	0.065101	0.158431	0.05962	0.105025	0.093591	0.006852	-0.06554	-0.02043	-0.0442	-0.09398
BS2	0.69991	1	0.496307	0.041337	0.206717	0.129731	0.176251	0.07546	0.116274	0.105211	0.136583	0.13315	0.097175	-0.02052	0.033147	-0.00483	-0.00978	0.009211	-0.0446	-0.15489
BS3	0.473771	0.496307	1	-0.07816	-0.01016	0.030042	0.004339	-0.00282	-0.03413	-0.00129	-0.02336	-0.04718	-0.02119	-0.08656	-0.14058	-0.11584	-0.1464	-0.06595	-0.11645	-0.31012
BS4	0.143319	0.041337	-0.07816	1	0.554788	0.50842	0.505697	0.294696	0.177868	0.218294	0.330951	0.172647	0.285839	0.084746	0.113061	0.068864	0.110568	0.19324	-0.06653	-0.02829
BS5	0.134782	0.206717	-0.01016	0.554788	1	0.297322	0.614123	0.201932	0.267729	0.243582	0.258049	0.180266	0.346431	-0.00657	0.039323	0.1068	0.103292	0.092032	-0.07841	0.037156
BS6	0.203711	0.129731	0.030042	0.50842	0.297322	1	0.407406	0.180315	0.186437	0.008693	0.118076	0.103171	0.158448	0.166353	0.139993	0.124015	0.16574	0.211912	-0.03394	0.028807
BS7	0.099265	0.176251	0.004339	0.505697	0.614123	0.407406	1	0.267295	0.337769	0.176022	0.26291	0.234175	0.197937	-0.06793	0.065671	0.024388	0.084272	0.283503	-0.08744	-0.00818
RC1	0.043773	0.07546	-0.00282	0.294696	0.201932	0.180315	0.267295	1	0.342275	0.402631	0.381212	0.390937	0.366793	0.087028	0.176519	0.193379	0.229481	0.177412	0.141664	0.140251
RC2	0.101992	0.116274	-0.03413	0.177868	0.267729	0.186437	0.337769	0.342275	1	0.419619	0.443237	0.394963	0.430898	0.06879	0.085125	0.22574	0.179563	0.224221	0.108776	-0.00932
RC3	-0.04129	0.105211	-0.00129	0.218294	0.243582	0.008693	0.176022	0.402631	0.419619	1	0.508736	0.304953	0.404573	0.014631	0.1369	0.111296	0.164873	0.141168	0.06069	-0.03885
RC4	0.065101	0.136583	-0.02336	0.330951	0.258049	0.118076	0.26291	0.381212	0.443237	0.508736	1	0.485847	0.324628	0.130138	0.212842	0.322001	0.334876	0.253395	0.120752	0.030124
RC5	0.158431	0.13315	-0.04718	0.172647	0.180266	0.103171	0.234175	0.390937	0.394963	0.304953	0.485847	1	0.421861	0.138222	0.291357	0.219078	0.23959	0.255684	0.166893	0.070055
RC6	0.05962	0.097175	-0.02119	0.285839	0.346431	0.158448	0.197937	0.366793	0.430898	0.404573	0.324628	0.421861	1	0.104456	0.150151	0.257182	0.205435	0.145533	0.093857	0.09751
Action1	0.105025	-0.02052	-0.08656	0.084746	-0.00657	0.166353	-0.06793	0.087028	0.06879	0.014631	0.130138	0.138222	0.104456	1	0.538869	0.3147	0.359905	0.244816	0.44537	0.464884
Action2	0.093591	0.033147	-0.14058	0.113061	0.039323	0.139993	0.065671	0.176519	0.085125	0.1369	0.212842	0.291357	0.150151	0.538869	1	0.29899	0.407052	0.225316	0.273916	0.350091
Action3	0.006852	-0.00483	-0.11584	0.068864	0.1068	0.124015	0.024388	0.193379	0.22574	0.111296	0.322001	0.219078	0.257182	0.3147	0.29899	1	0.454635	0.264629	0.268365	0.273275
Action4	-0.06554	-0.00978	-0.1464	0.110568	0.103292	0.16574	0.084272	0.229481	0.179563	0.164873	0.334876	0.23959	0.205435	0.359905	0.407052	0.454635	1	0.386074	0.47857	0.408464
Action5	-0.02043	0.009211	-0.06595	0.19324	0.092032	0.211912	0.283503	0.177412	0.224221	0.141168	0.253395	0.255684	0.145533	0.244816	0.225316	0.264629	0.386074	1	0.375523	0.25067
Action6	-0.0442	-0.0446	-0.11645	-0.06653	-0.07841	-0.03394	-0.08744	0.141664	0.108776	0.06069	0.120752	0.166893	0.093857	0.44537	0.273916	0.268365	0.47857	0.375523	1	0.613853
Action7	-0.09398	-0.15489	-0.31012	-0.02829	0.037156	0.028807	-0.00818	0.140251	-0.00932	-0.03885	0.030124	0.070055	0.09751	0.464884	0.350091	0.273275	0.408464	0.25067	0.613853	1

## Practitioners Correlations

Row	BS1	BS2	BS3	BS4	BS5	BS6	BS7	VC1	VC2	VC3	VC4	VC5	VC6	Action1	Action2	Action3	Action4	Action5	Action6	Action7
BS1	1	0.279508	0.825723	0.206431	0.298807	0.241459	0.531209	0.4375	0.064984	-6.4E-16	2.72E-17	-0.1494	0.109632	-0.24146	-0.03467	3.19E-17	0.122967	0.096825	-0.29881	-0.0519
BS2	0.279508	1	0.123091	0.43082	0.534522	0.475128	0.475128	0.279508	0.058124	0.166667	-0.16667	-0.13363	0.294174	-0.04319	-0.15504	-0.22866	-0.29329	-0.43301	-0.03341	-0.32497
BS3	0.825723	0.123091	1	0.318182	0.394771	0.350905	0.66991	0.619292	0.257564	0.123091	0.184637	-0.09869	-0.14484	-0.35091	-1.6E-17	0.04222	0.189536	0.319801	-0.27141	0.102859
BS4	0.206431	0.43082	0.318182	1	0.888235	0.988914	0.829412	0.619292	0.4722	0.43082	0.184637	-0.09869	0.217622	-0.35091	0.114507	-0.27443	-0.21661	-0.2132	-0.27141	-0.24
BS5	0.298807	0.534522	0.394771	0.888235	1	0.946602	0.946602	0.747018	0.497096	0.534522	0.133631	-0.07143	-0.10483	-0.25397	0.331497	-0.27501	-0.05879	-0.23146	-0.19643	-0.1737
BS6	0.241459	0.475128	0.350905	0.988914	0.946602	1	0.88806	0.676084	0.492071	0.475128	0.172774	-0.09235	0.118593	-0.32836	0.187512	-0.28149	-0.17102	-0.22444	-0.25397	-0.22458
BS7	0.531209	0.475128	0.66991	0.829412	0.946602	0.88806	1	0.820959	0.492071	0.475128	0.172774	-0.09235	-0.13553	-0.32836	0.267874	-0.20741	0.019003	-0.07481	-0.25397	-0.10427
VC1	0.4375	0.279508	0.619292	0.619292	0.747018	0.676084	0.820959	1	0.649844	0.838525	0.559017	0.298807	-0.21926	-0.24146	0.381356	-0.19174	-4E-16	0.193649	-0.0747	0.103807
VC2	0.064984	0.058124	0.257564	0.4722	0.497096	0.492071	0.492071	0.649844	1	0.639362	0.741079	0.497096	-0.12539	-0.04017	0.396515	0.169459	0.089499	0.201347	0.318452	0.237453
VC3	-6.4E-16	0.166667	0.123091	0.43082	0.534522	0.475128	0.475128	0.838525	0.639362	1	0.666667	0.534522	-0.19612	-0.04319	0.46513	-0.22866	-0.10999	0.144338	0.133631	0.139272
VC4	2.72E-17	-0.16667	0.184637	0.184637	0.133631	0.172774	0.172774	0.559017	0.741079	0.666667	1	0.801784	-0.04903	0.043193	0.387609	0.014292	0.018331	0.360844	0.283965	0.324967
VC5	-0.1494	-0.13363	-0.09869	-0.09869	-0.07143	-0.09235	-0.09235	0.298807	0.497096	0.534522	0.801784	1	-0.10483	0.092351	0.580119	0.18334	0.235159	0.46291	0.607143	0.570735
VC6	0.109632	0.294174	-0.14484	0.217262	-0.10483	0.118593	-0.13553	-0.21926	-0.12539	-0.19612	-0.04903	-0.10483	1	0.135535	-0.42569	0.100901	-0.30198	-0.16984	-0.09172	-0.25492
Action1	-0.24146	-0.04319	-0.35091	-0.35091	-0.25397	-0.32836	-0.24146	-0.04017	-0.04319	0.043193	0.092351	0.135535	1	0.214299	0.429641	0.249641	0.171023	0.149626	0.427125	0.224583
Action2	-0.03467	-0.15504	-1.6E-17	0.114507	0.331497	0.187512	0.267874	0.381356	0.396515	0.46513	0.387609	0.580119	-0.42569	0.214299	1	0.212718	0.54568	0.37596	0.476527	0.547026
Action3	3.19E-17	-0.22866	0.04222	-0.27443	-0.27501	-0.28149	-0.20741	-0.19174	0.169459	-0.22866	0.014292	0.18334	0.100901	0.429641	0.212718	1	0.653894	0.544581	0.733359	0.605083
Action4	0.122967	-0.29329	0.189536	-0.21661	-0.05879	-0.17102	0.019003	-4E-16	0.089499	-0.10999	0.018331	0.235159	-0.30198	0.171023	0.54568	0.653894	1	0.4445	0.573199	0.776103
Action5	0.096825	-0.43301	0.319801	-0.2132	-0.23146	-0.22444	-0.07481	0.193649	0.201347	0.144338	0.360844	0.46291	-0.16984	0.149626	0.37596	0.544581	0.4445	1	0.46291	0.804084
Action6	-0.29881	-0.03341	-0.27141	-0.27141	-0.19643	-0.25397	-0.25397	-0.0747	0.318452	0.133631	0.283965	0.607143	-0.09172	0.427125	0.476527	0.733359	0.573199	0.46291	1	0.73203
Action7	-0.0519	-0.32497	0.102859	-0.24	-0.1737	-0.22458	-0.10427	0.103807	0.237453	0.139272	0.324967	0.570735	-0.25492	0.224583	0.547026	0.605083	0.776103	0.804084	0.73203	1

## Pastors Correlations

Row	BS1	BS2	BS3	BS7	VC1	VC2	VC3	VC4	VC5	VC6	Action1	Action2	Action3	Action4	Action5	Action6	Action7
BS1	1	0.654654	-0.21822	1	1	-0.37796	-0.14286	-0.20365	-0.14286	-0.26726	0.203653	0.203653	0.338062	-0.09759	0.060523	-0.80178	-0.29277
BS2	0.654654	1	0.333333	0.654654	0.654654	5.29E-16	-0.21822	-0.31109	-0.21822	0.408248	-0.1037	-0.1037	3.01E-16	0.149071	0.09245	-0.8165	-0.44721
BS3	-0.21822	0.333333	1	-0.21822	-0.21822	0.57735	-0.21822	0.518476	-0.21822	0.408248	-0.1037	-0.1037	0.258199	0.745356	0.46225	-2.7E-16	-0.44721
BS7	1	0.654654	-0.21822	1	1	-0.37796	-0.14286	-0.20365	-0.14286	-0.26726	0.203653	0.203653	0.338062	-0.09759	0.060523	-0.80178	-0.29277
VC1	1	0.654654	-0.21822	1	1	-0.37796	-0.14286	-0.20365	-0.14286	-0.26726	0.203653	0.203653	0.338062	-0.09759	0.060523	-0.80178	-0.29277
VC2	-0.37796	5.29E-16	0.57735	-0.37796	-0.37796	1	0.377964	0.538816	0.377964	0.353553	-0.53882	-0.53882	0.223607	0.258199	0.480384	0.353553	-0.2582
VC3	-0.14286	-0.21822	-0.21822	-0.14286	-0.14286	0.377964	1	-0.20365	-0.14286	-0.26726	-0.33942	-0.33942	-0.33806	-0.48795	-0.42366	0.267261	-0.29277
VC4	-0.20365	-0.31109	0.518476	-0.20365	-0.20365	0.538816	-0.20365	1	0.339422	-0.127	0.032258	0.032258	0.803219	0.602861	0.776516	0.381	-0.04637
VC5	-0.14286	-0.21822	-0.21822	-0.14286	-0.14286	0.377964	-0.14286	0.339422	1	0.267261	-0.33942	-0.33942	0.338062	-0.09759	0.544705	0.267261	0.48795
VC6	-0.26726	0.408248	0.408248	-0.26726	-0.26726	0.353553	-0.26726	-0.127	0.267261	1	-0.381	-0.127	-0.31623	0.365148	0.339683	1.53E-16	0.182574
Action1	0.203653	-0.1037	-0.1037	0.203653	0.203653	-0.53882	-0.33942	0.032258	-0.33942	-0.381	1	0.225806	0.321288	0.324617	-0.08628	-0.381	0.417365
Action2	0.203653	-0.1037	-0.1037	0.203653	0.203653	-0.53882	-0.33942	0.032258	-0.33942	-0.127	0.225806	1	3.92E-16	0.324617	0.143799	0.127	0.046374
Action3	0.338062	3.01E-16	0.258199	0.338062	0.338062	0.223607	-0.33806	0.803219	0.338062	-0.31623	0.321288	3.92E-16	1	0.46188	0.716115	-0.15811	-1.3E-16
Action4	-0.09759	0.149071	0.745356	-0.09759	-0.09759	0.258199	-0.48795	0.602861	-0.09759	0.365148	0.324617	0.324617	0.46188	1	0.702863	-2E-17	0.066667
Action5	0.060523	0.09245	0.46225	0.060523	0.060523	0.480384	-0.42366	0.776516	0.544705	0.339683	-0.08628	0.143799	0.716115	0.702863	1	0.113228	0.124035
Action6	-0.80178	-0.8165	-2.7E-16	-0.80178	-0.80178	0.353553	0.267261	0.381	0.267261	1.53E-16	-0.381	0.127	-0.15811	-2E-17	0.113228	1	0.182574
Action7	-0.29277	-0.44721	-0.44721	-0.29277	-0.29277	-0.2582	-0.29277	-0.04637	0.48795	0.182574	0.417365	0.046374	-1.3E-16	0.666667	0.124035	0.182574	1



## Appendix E

### Factor Analysis Raw Data

#### *Congregants Factor Analysis*

Row	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Action7	0.73	-0.07	0.01	-0.17
Action6	0.71	0.08	-0.14	-0.06
Action1	0.68	0.00	0.03	0.05
Action4	0.61	0.27	0.06	-0.09
Action2	0.55	0.15	0.07	0.05
Action3	0.45	0.28	0.03	-0.03
Action5	0.41	0.23	0.19	-0.06
RC4	0.16	0.69	0.16	0.04
RC3	-0.01	0.69	0.05	-0.03
RC2	0.07	0.60	0.17	0.06
RC5	0.21	0.57	0.10	0.11
RC6	0.13	0.54	0.20	0.02
RC1	0.16	0.52	0.19	0.00
BS4	0.03	0.22	0.73	-0.01
BS7	-0.04	0.26	0.69	0.03
BS5	-0.02	0.26	0.67	0.06
BS6	0.14	0.03	0.59	0.11
BS1	0.06	0.00	0.16	0.86
BS2	-0.03	0.14	0.10	0.80
BS3	-0.20	0.00	-0.06	0.59

#### *Practitioners Factor Analysis*

Row	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
BS5	0.96	-0.10	0.11	0.14	-0.15
BS6	0.92	-0.17	0.15	0.14	0.02
BS4	0.87	-0.20	0.16	0.14	0.10
BS7	0.87	-0.06	0.12	0.44	-0.15
BS2	0.65	-0.10	-0.14	-0.03	0.42
VC1	0.62	-0.06	0.58	0.42	-0.19
Action3	-0.17	0.88	-0.04	0.06	0.19
Action4	-0.04	0.83	-0.09	0.16	-0.37
Action6	-0.09	0.82	0.30	-0.34	0.03
Action7	-0.19	0.80	0.32	0.10	-0.26
Action5	-0.32	0.58	0.40	0.37	-0.14
Action2	0.28	0.51	0.38	-0.15	-0.53
Action1	-0.13	0.49	0.00	-0.41	0.26
VC4	0.03	0.06	0.95	0.08	0.02
VC5	-0.13	0.32	0.83	-0.14	-0.07
VC3	0.44	-0.09	0.77	-0.05	-0.18
VC2	0.44	0.18	0.71	0.07	-0.02
BS3	0.26	0.05	0.08	0.94	-0.08
BS1	0.23	0.03	-0.08	0.85	0.14
VC6	0.04	-0.04	-0.06	-0.02	0.91

*Pastors Factor Analysis*

Row	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6	Factor 7
BS1	0.98	0.02	-0.13	0.02	0.00	0.13	0.00
BS7	0.98	0.02	-0.13	0.02	0.00	0.13	0.00
VC1	0.98	0.02	-0.13	0.02	0.00	0.13	0.00
BS2	0.76	-0.07	0.54	-0.10	-0.29	-0.15	0.00
VC4	-0.24	0.96	-0.14	-0.03	-0.03	-0.01	0.00
Action5	0.06	0.89	0.33	-0.13	0.23	0.11	0.00
Action3	0.31	0.88	-0.24	0.20	0.13	-0.08	0.00
Action4	-0.11	0.70	0.47	0.31	-0.30	0.21	0.00
BS3	-0.14	0.55	0.48	-0.05	-0.64	-0.17	0.00
VC2	-0.30	0.50	0.17	-0.52	-0.12	-0.56	0.00
VC6	-0.14	-0.02	0.95	-0.20	0.10	-0.08	0.00
Action1	0.13	0.08	-0.19	0.95	-0.05	0.10	0.00
VC5	-0.09	0.35	0.12	-0.27	0.85	-0.24	0.00
Action7	-0.32	-0.05	0.14	0.51	0.74	0.07	0.00
Action2	0.06	0.07	-0.03	0.09	-0.10	0.98	0.00
Action6	-0.87	0.15	-0.20	-0.35	0.14	0.21	0.00
BS5	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.80
BS6	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.50
BS4	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.33
VC3	-0.18	-0.32	-0.49	-0.46	-0.20	-0.38	0.00

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